

Clifford Faber

OVERSIZE



Eighth Army



5th Indian Division



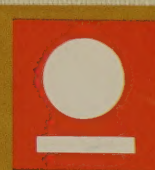
7th Armoured Division ("The Desert Rats")



1st Armoured Division



2nd New Zealand Division



10 Corps



10th Armoured Division



13 Corps



G.H.Q. Middle East



4th Indian Division



50th (Northumbrian) Division



Polish Formations



30 Corps



44th (Home Counties) Division



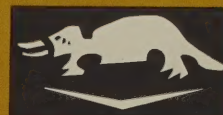
French Forces of Interior



Greece



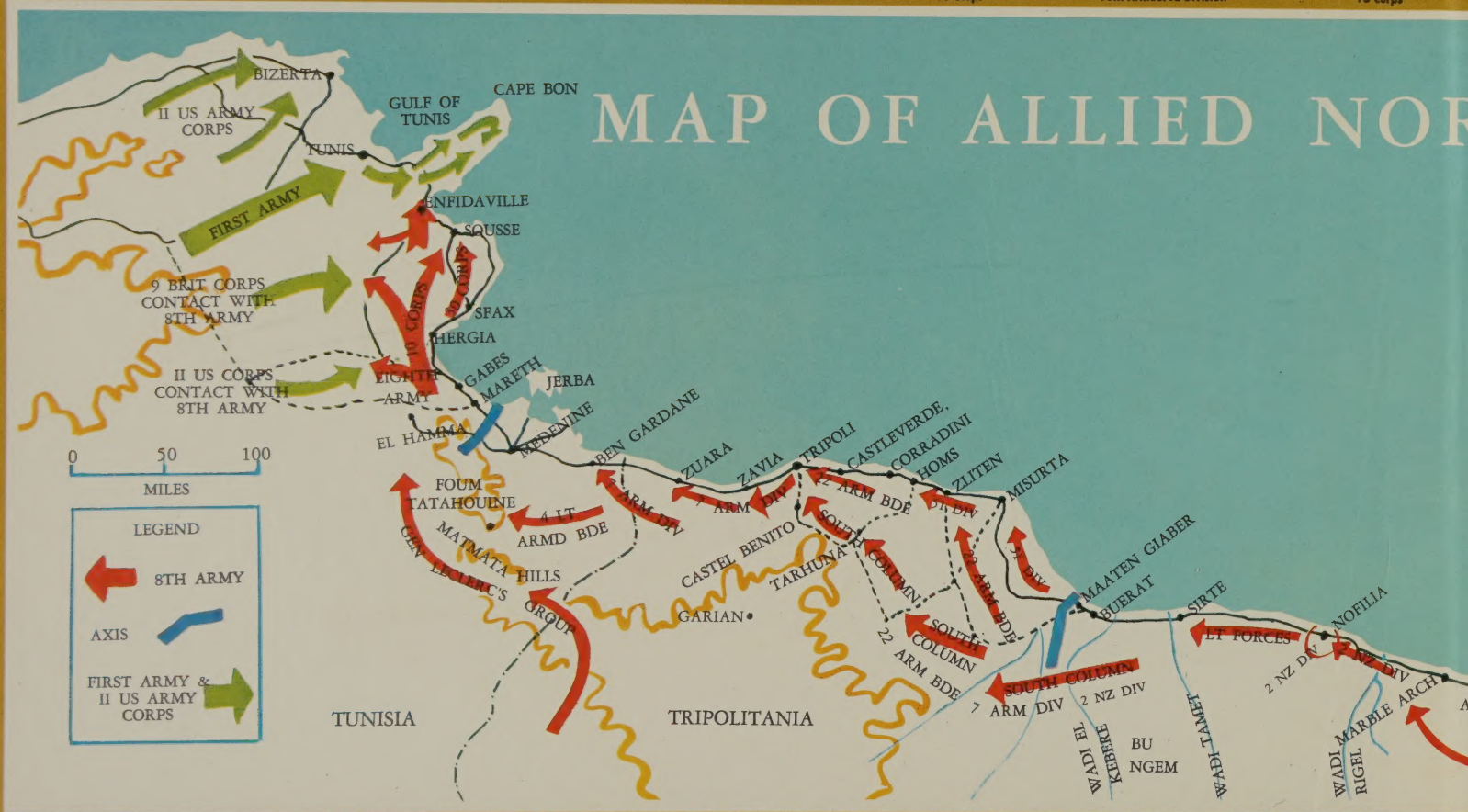
1st South African Division

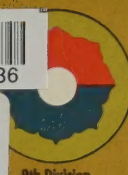


9th Australian Division



51st (Highland) Division





**Allied Force Headquarters
(A.F.H.Q.)**



9th Air Force



Airborne Divisions



Rangers



First Army



6th Armoured Division



3rd Infantry Division



2nd Army Corps



North African Theater



2nd Division



Guards Armoured Division



Desert Air Force



*When after the war is over a man is asked what he did
it will be enough for him to say I marched with the Eighth Army...*

PRIME MINISTER WINSTON CHURCHILL'S

Address to the troops in Tripoli, 1943



SKETCH BOOK





FOREWORDS *by* TOM LEA *and* STEPHEN GALATTI

DESERT RAT SKETCH BOOK

WRITTEN *and* ILLUSTRATED, ON-THE-SPOT, IN FULL COLOR BY *Clifford Faber*



SKETCHBOOK PRESS, FRANKLIN SQUARE, NEW YORK, 1959

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 59—13535

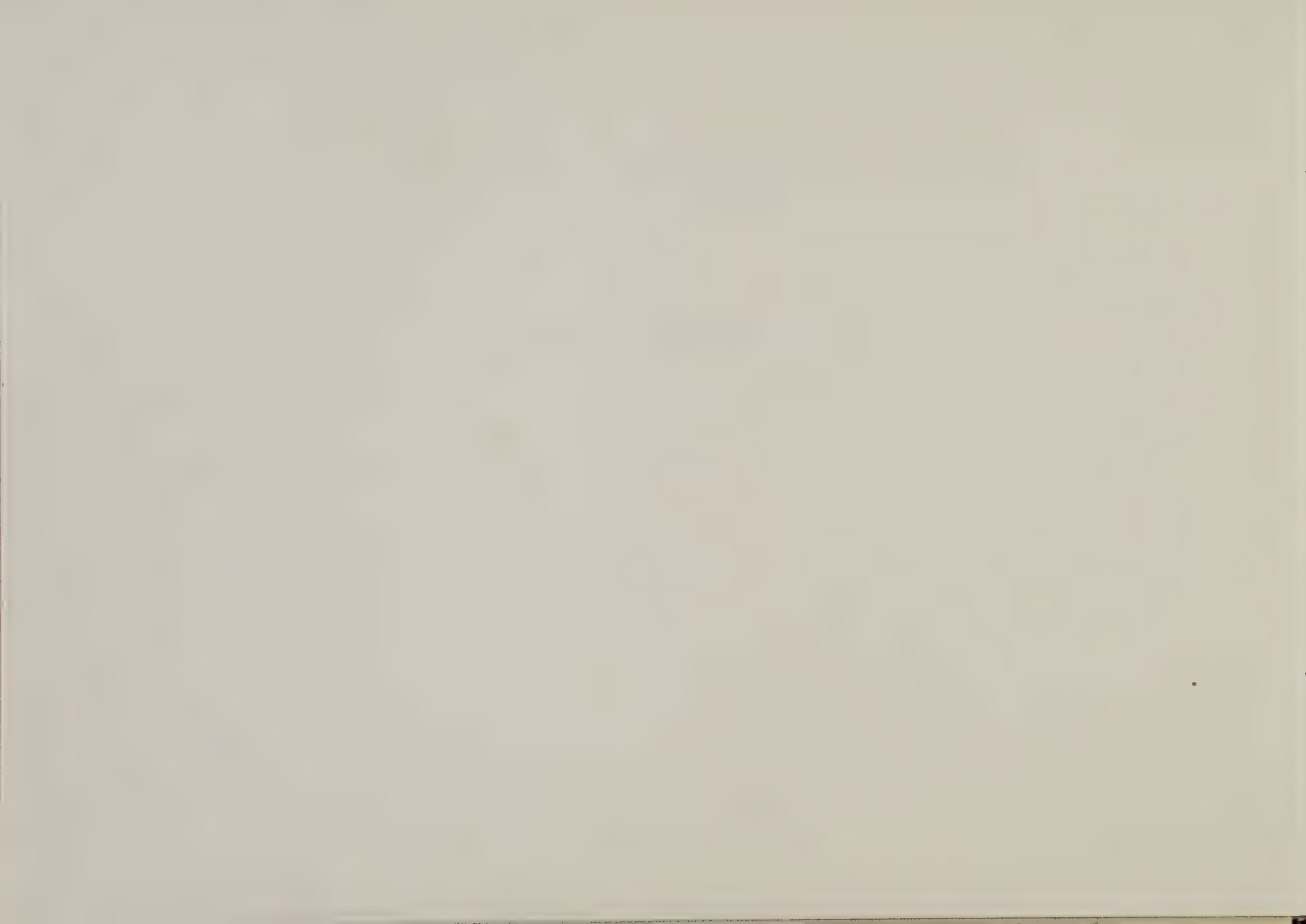
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FIRST EDITION

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER



FOREWORD

WE WERE a raunchy transient bunch of inmates at "Photographers' Villa" in Algiers, in a backwash of war, in September of 1943. Our villa had a beautiful view and it also had fleas. Like our villa we had fleas too, but unlike it, our view of Algiers was dim, not beautiful.

In various degrees of depression and frustration all of us were sweating out military travel orders which would take us, as representatives of the press, to where we could see the war rather than the daily communiqué. Most of us spent most of the daylight hours bumming jeep and truck rides to a drab office in town where we regularly waited and were regularly told our orders weren't out yet. After a real hard day at the office, we would drift back to the ineluctable luxury of our flea trap on the Algerian hill, to await another day.

Our villa boasted of a cadaverous Arab named Achille. He wore a somewhat battered fez. He could cook a little and he could also demonstrate some pretty fair connections with the local black market. To escape the GI chow at the Transient Mess in town, we would occasionally commission our man Achille to come not only with the standing order for enough bottles of Algerian red to last the evening, but with something to eat.

One rainy evening Achille arrived carrying a kind of dark limp thing he said was a fresh leg of mutton. He cooked it garnished with tomatoes and green peppers, and after we had taken care of a good deal of the red, and Achille had fortified the entree with cans of C ration, we dined. Then Elmer Lower, a former inmate just returned from Cairo, blew in; we sent our accomplished Achille out for more wine. Elmer brought a friend along and introduced him. His name was Cliff Saber.

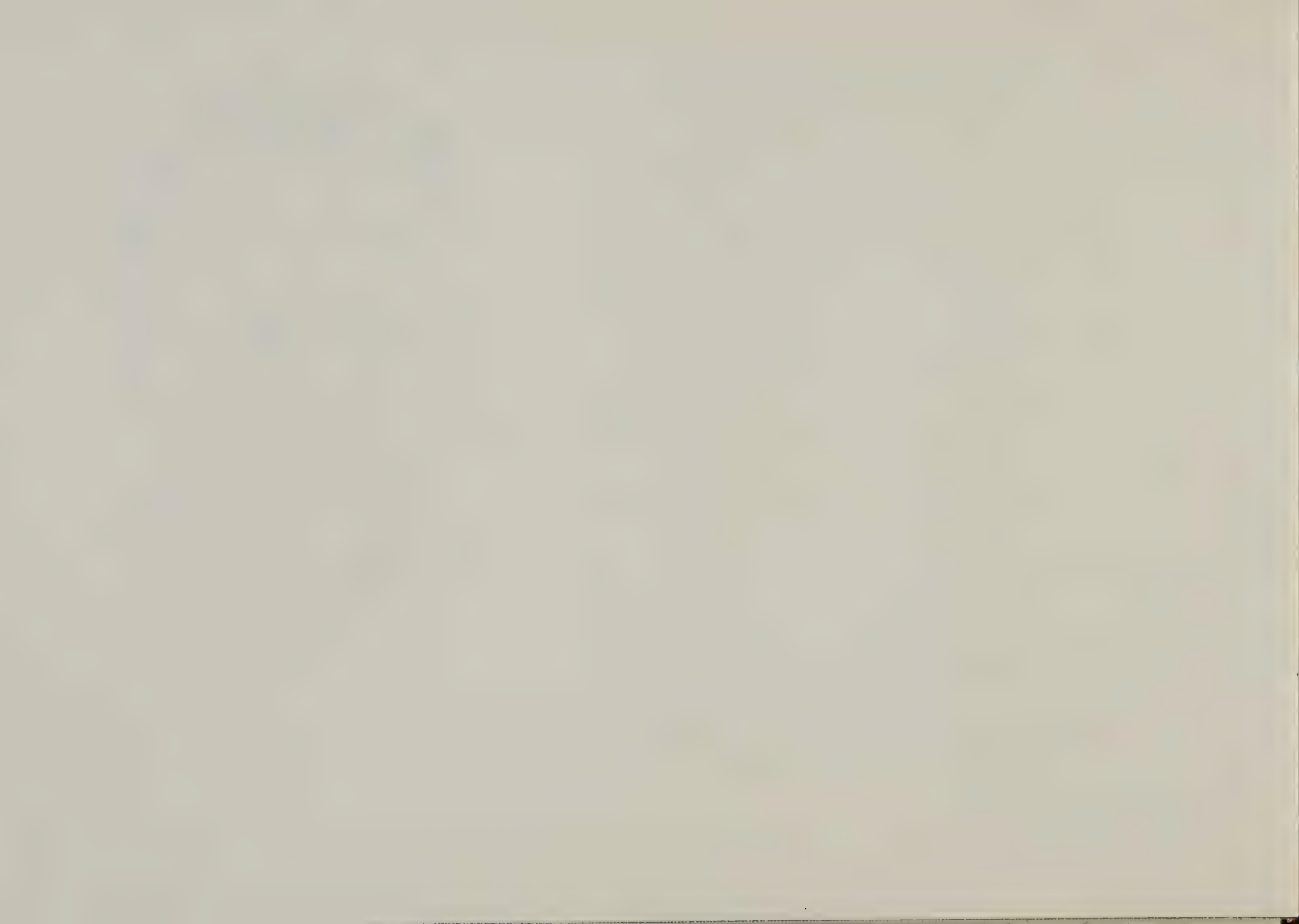
Saber had been a volunteer American ambulance driver with the British 8th Army. He had seen ten months of desert fighting, until one night in March at the Mareth Line he suffered a very grave shrapnel wound in the head. Just out of six months' hospital, he was on his way home to the States. He was still banged up and he was a very good guy.

He was also a gifted painter. During the 8th's hard push across Africa, Saber in the midst of his other duties had tenaciously managed to keep a graphic record of what he saw. He did not have his paintings with him that night in Algiers, but the experience that had created those paintings was most vividly present by his very presence. We talked and drank late. I made a pencil drawing of his war-shadowed face long after midnight and gave him that page from my sketch book. We met again in New York, when the war was over.

This volume is the harvest of an experience in combat on the sandy reaches of the North African desert more than a decade ago. As a war artist Cliff Saber did it the hard way. He did it because he wanted to do it. He did it with honesty and he did it with skill. These pictures were made of more than paint and paper. They were created from more important materials: a sensitive eye, a stout heart, a steady hand. Here they are and I am glad.

TOM LEA







PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ARTIST PAINTING IN THE FIELD *(Courtesy of Life Magazine)*

DESERT RAT SKETCHBOOK

THIS BOOK aims to accomplish little more than its title suggests, which is to say that it primarily is a pictorial record I kept under imposed limitations. It makes no claim to being a complete history of the whole desert campaign in North Africa, although it can be used as a reference. Its purpose is to depict the everyday life of the British 8th Army soldier (or Desert Rat), with whom I lived and worked. Paintings and narrative together cannot possibly give a full account of the sacrifices and the hell the 8th Army went through. That task will be recorded by historians. But this book does claim to offer a quick reminder for those whose memories may have waned over the past decade and a half, and who are likely to forget still more.

CLIFFORD SABER

1959

Desert Rat Sketch Book

Introduction

The reportorial watercolors and mobile paintings in this sketch book were done along with my work as a volunteer with the American Field Service in North Africa during World War II. They were executed, captioned, and dated on the spot. The sketch book has been left intact; no work has been added (or deleted) since I was dragged out of the field on a stretcher. The pictures are the first of a series intended to show the life of the men in the British 8th Army and the American Field Service from Alamein to Tunisia, where we met up with the Americans and the Allies. I had hoped to portray as a last painting Tommy Atkinses and Johnny Doughboys lighting cigarettes together.

Unhappily the series is unfinished, for, in the Mareth Line on the 23rd of March, 1943, the third night of the battle, I met one with my name on it. If it hadn't been for the timely bandaging of my head wound by Allan Bowron and William Schorger, two Field Service men from my subsection, and Major K.C. Eden, Captain F.G. Billingham, and Major McKenzie of the No 1 mobile Neurosurgical Unit, Royal Army Medical Corps, I would not be here to write this introduction.

Aside from complications due to the usual duties, tensions, and interruptions of a forward-area war, painting in the desert is far removed from the comforts of studio work or even outdoor sketching back home. One is constantly confronted by the glare and heat of the sun. It is so hot that it dries up many attempts to lay in weeks.

Even if you work in the shade of a vehicle, the paint will dry as soon as a brush stroke is completed. Occasional khamsans and dust storms play havoc with the material, scratching the surface of the paper, getting into the paint and water and even into the brush itself.

To insure the durability and permanence of my daily finished work despite desert punishment and repeated handling, I used an ink-line and water-color technique.

Since I was with a rapidly moving army evacuating wounded, the use of normal outdoor sketching paraphernalia was out of the question. My kit included a sketch book and a vest-pocket-size analine water color set with normal-size brushes cut down to fit inside it, other brushes which were shortened and inserted into fountain pens from which the inners were removed, and a used-up vest-pocket color box filled with ink in cake form. These I carried on my person at all times.

A scrounged "Die" water bottle with a screwable zipper stopper was carried on my webbing belt in the field. This canteen was ideal, as I had water and cup always together and ready to use. In painting I used my own canteen water which was rationed, a bottle every other day. But when we were attached to an ADS we sometimes never saw the water truck for a week or so. However, using this water for painting was worth it.

As the 8th Army pressed forward so speedily from Sirt to Tripoli, I found it exceedingly difficult to sit outdoors and paint the surrounding landscapes and various personnel. To overcome this I tried making color notes in the sketch book while actually moving in our Dodge ambulance; one of the boys would usually take my place at the wheel.

In order to execute one of these paintings done on the go, I put about an inch of water into a U.S. Army canteen cup and fastened its long handle to the door of the glove compartment in the dashboard. When we hit a bump or a mine hole the water would splash, but it seldom reached the top of the canteen cup or sloshed on the painting, although it constantly became thick with dust and sand and had to be replaced. A rubber band kept the paper from whipping around in the wind. It was impossible to use pen or pencil to draw a scene, consequently I had to draw and paint at the same time with a brush. The vest-pocket water-color set attached to the thumb of my left hand by the box ring allowed both hands comparative freedom, the left to hold the book, the right to do the work. Details in the paintings were done when we stopped in convoy or along the road to brew up, a famous 8th Army pastime.

The paintings were done quite rapidly. The average time was from five to ten minutes or as soon as the color washes dried.

When we first entered Tunisia we hit a sand storm. Inside of an hour while plowing through it, I had completed five paintings of the intensity of the storm, a real khamseen — I was so engrossed in recording the vagaries of this khamseen that, as the light was falling fast, I kept on painting in an endeavor to feel out the colors mentally. Such was my rolling Dodge studio.

Clifford Sater

June 6, 1943

15th Scottish Base Hospital, Cairo, Egypt

P. S. The narrative-sketch content of the book, written later, is an editing of my "on the spot" letters home, compiled in sequence with the paintings and hand-script captions. Diaries and cameras were denied to forward troops because of the danger of their falling into enemy hands. Consequently letter reminders were the only records of observations and experiences. They were carefully written according to army regulations lest the censors hack them to pieces. And because of the 8th Army's lengthy supply lines, letters took the form of novels.

Factual data of the 8th Army recap is from British Information Services, and newspapers kept from the time.

Excerpts from General Montgomery's dispatches to the men in the field were procured from the 8th Army weekly, *The Crusader*.



MESS CALL ON THE MARCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ALTHOUGH I mentioned the timely efforts in my behalf of William D. Schorger, Allan Bowron, and the RAMC surgical team of Doctors Eden, Gillingham, and Mackenzie in my original sketch-book introduction, I want to say, sixteen years later, that my gratitude to them has grown with time.

I want to express my thanks to the 8th Army and its many and varied units for their friendliness and hospitality; without them these sketches would never have been done.

My thanks, too, to Stephen Galatti, director general, and Larry Barretto of the American Field Service. Since a soldier never chooses his own battlefield, I am particularly indebted to them for sending me to the land of my forefathers, the Middle East. Looking back, I am confirmed in my belief that this area, more than any other, aptly demonstrates the mingling of splendor and horror in human history and illustrates the slow and painful way that lies ahead for the member countries of the United Nations.

Without the invaluable help and thoughtfulness of Bill Schorger (again), who rescued my work from the field, and then buried my bloodstained cap with military honors, these sketches might never have been kept intact. The further help of Elmer Lower, who received them from Bill and safeguarded them at base, enabled me to bring them home. For Elmer's kindness in taking care of my personal affairs, despite his pressing duties at the Office of War Information, and for his friendly visits to me in the hospital, I am most grateful. He helped me through the worst time of my life.

I should also like to thank Ben Stern, now a Public Relations Consultant of Washington, D. C., who, as a Marine major, generously brought some of the first paintings back for an exhibition.

I am grateful to Tom Lea of El Paso, Texas, for his foreword. Tom's pen and brush record of the war, in both the Pacific and the Atlantic theaters, far exceeds this humble effort.

I especially wish to thank the following for their kind assistance: Cora Alice Taylor, for reading the manuscript and making innumerable suggestions; Polly Chill, for same, and for skillful editorial help; Jean M. Luetzow, for

proofreading; D. J. Raymond and George Carnegie, for detailed publishing information; and Charles Mannberger, for invaluable production assistance.

Most of all, I owe a debt to Madeline Truslow for her wonderful understanding and patience during the three years I labored over the preparation of this book and who, in the intervals between her own work, contrived somehow to type what I wrote and to improve it through criticism.

And finally, this book was made possible by the generous financial assistance of three friends: Vincent Garvey, whose foresight, faith, and imagination have been a great bulwark; George Cowan, a war buddy who came to my rescue in time of need; and, most important, Reginald B. Taylor, a veteran of two world wars, who provided the means for publishing this book and to whom I am profoundly thankful.



THE BEGINNING OF THE END



Eighth Army

8th Indian Division

7th Armoured Division ("The Desert Rats")

1st Armoured Division

2nd New Zealand Division

10 Corps

10th Armoured Division

13 Corps

ALLIED NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN RECAP 1942-43

THE MIDDLE EAST
CAIRO ALEXANDRIA EL TAHAG HELIOPOLIS
SUEZ CANAL
PORT SAID ISMALIA PORT TEWFIK

THE 8th ARMY
FLAP AND STAND

THE SUPPLY LINES FROM
AMERICA — 14,500 MILES
BRITAIN — 12,000 MILES

EL ALAMEIN
800 GUNS

THE TIDE TURNS THE CHASE IN EGYPT
EL DABA FUKA MERSA MATRUH
SIDI BARRANI BUG BUG SOLLUM

If Hitler was to accomplish his plan for world conquest, he had to conquer the Middle East. Not only did that area contain oil badly needed for Nazi tanks, planes and transports, but control of the Suez Canal was the key to full encirclement of his wanted-world. North Africa, whose terrain had seen historical conquest in the past, now witnessed the development of a new form of warfare — complete motorized mobility.

In the early summer of 1942, after two years of back-and-forth desert fighting in slit trenches and amidst thick-coming sandstorms for control of Libya, the British were forced to retreat before Rommel's Africa Korps to the line at El Alamein, seventy miles from Alexandria and dangerously close to Cairo, Egypt. Here they stood at a narrow sixty-mile front in the desert, flanked on its left, in the south, by the impassable quicksands of the Qattara Depression and on its right, in the north, by the Mediterranean seacoast.

Then — across a fantastic sea-supply route from England and America, around the Cape of Good Hope, through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea to Suez, the 8th Army was re-created. Its hitting power was strengthened with fresh infantry and tank divisions from the United Kingdom, new equipment (including British Churchill and American Sherman tanks), and the RAF which was reinforced with squadrons from the American air force. General Alexander replaced General Auchinleck as Middle East commander-in-chief, and General Montgomery replaced General Ritchie as commander of the 8th Army.

On the moonlit night of October 23, 1942, the usual quiet evening routine of ack-ack and gunfire was shattered at precisely 9:40 P.M. by the first Montgomery barrage. The front was saturated with guns. For six miles along the northern end there was a gun for every twenty-five yards. They all let loose at once and roared all night. After laboring hazardously for weeks clearing passages through the mine fields, the Royal Engineer sappers now taped a mine-free path. Shortly after the barrage started, the infantry went in to clear the way for tanks to come and followed up the attack.

Rommel's Africa Korps gave way, retreating along the coast road and desert tracks 1,500 miles in fifteen weeks — losing Tripoli and finally taking a stand within the Mareth Line in Tunisia. It was the beginning of the first decisive offensive and permanent land defeat to be inflicted on the Axis; and one of the most remarkable retreats and pursuits in all history. The tide had turned!



Polish Formations

30 Corps

44th (Home Counties)
Division

French Forces of Interior

Greece

1st South African Division

9th Australian Division

51st (Highland) Division



Armored Force



34th Division



3rd Division



1st Division



9th Division



82nd Airborne Div.



Mobile First Zone

Allied Force Headquarters
(A.F.H.Q.)

9th Air Force



Airborne Divisions



Rangers



Desert Air Force

IN LIBYA

CAPPUZZO BARDIA SI AZEIZ GAMUT
EL ADEM TOBRUK BIRHARMAT
KNIGHTSBRIDGE GAZALA BIR HACHEIM
TIMIMI DERNA CIRENE MUSUS BEDA FOMM
AGEDABIA SIRTE TRIPOLI

IN TUNISIA

MEDENINE FOUM TATAHOUEIN MARETH
EL HAMMA GABES SFAX

MEETING THE AMERICANS
GABES-AKARIT ROAD

THE ALLIED COMMAND

EISENHOWER
ALEXANDER
MONTGOMERY

BATTLE OF TUNISIA AND AXIS EXPULSION

ENFIDAVILLE FAID FONDOUK GAUSA
KAIROUAN SOUSSE MEDIEZ MATEUR
SEDJENANE BIZERTE PONT DU FAHS
TUNIS CAPE BON

8th ARMY — END OF THE DRIVE
FIRST ALLIED VICTORY OF WORLD WAR II

On November 8, sixteen days after Montgomery's chase began, the BBC revealed a part of a grand Allied Plan. The biggest amphibious expedition the world had ever seen, at that time, had landed General Eisenhower's Anglo-American army on the shores of French North Africa. The whole of Vichy-held Morocco and Algeria were quickly occupied by British and American forces, and German troops began pouring into Tunisia. But with the armies of the two Allied nations advancing from the east and the west, the retreat was stopped and the squeeze of the Axis was at hand.

Hitler, apparently confident that he could still beat the British and unseasoned American troops, who were handicapped by long supply lines and a lack of airfields, poured supplies and reinforcements into Tunis and Bizerte. Here and in the mountains of Tunisia, the Nazis were well lodged, and Marshal Rommel reorganized his Afrika Korps behind the Mareth Line.

On March 28, 1943, Montgomery's 8th Army smashed the Mareth Line with a stroke around the southwest end. At the same time American forces under General Patton moved southeast toward Gabes. On April 7 some armored car Desert Rat patrols working along the Gabes Road from Wadi Akarit had the long-awaited experience of meeting and joyously greeting American patrols working from El Guettar. The two Allied armies, advancing from opposite directions, finally joined on the Gapa-Gabes road, formed a single front down the whole length of Tunisia, and drove the Nazis before them into a pocket.

General Montgomery and the 8th Army were now under the Supreme Allied Command of General Eisenhower, and General Alexander was made Eisenhower's deputy. General Eisenhower created a unique pattern of unity for the nations that was to bring tremendous success to the Allies. This pattern was soon to be adopted in other theaters of war under other Allied commanders.

Rommel was forced west from the Mareth Line on March 29, out into the open plains to Tunis, with the 8th Army on his back and the British and Americans coming in on his flank; Sfax was captured on April 10, Sousse on April 12, the American forces took Bizerte on May 7 and on the same day British forces took the city of Tunis. The Nazi elite had prepared for a long siege on Cape Bon, but their defensive positions were cut up into pockets before they could use them. Mass surrenders became the order of the day. The most important person to be taken was General Von Arnim. The Desert Fox was nowhere to be found; Hitler had recalled him shortly before the battle of the Mareth. The 8th Army's drive ended on May 13, 1943, when all resistance ceased.

It was the first time in World War II that American and British Allies, turning to the offensive, had won a victory over the Nazis; Africa was rid of the Axis and the stage was set for the assault on Europe.



First Army



6th Armoured Division



3rd Infantry Division



2nd Army Corps



North African Theater



2nd Division



Guards Armoured Division

THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE

AMONG THE smaller outfits in the 8th Army not featured in public dispatches were the American Field Service Volunteer Ambulance Units. The AFS, as it is better known, started with the French in 1914, when volunteer drivers were maintained at their own expense and that of public-spirited Americans. Again in World War II they started with the French, in 1939, got out after the collapse of France, and came to the Middle East of their own free will, without pay, well before the U.S.A. entered the war.

These volunteers represented America at her best. Among them were college students, sons of AFS men of 1914–17, writers, artists, and religious workers who wanted to do their part. Some were disabled and could not be accepted by an army medical board. Some were overage. The directors of the AFS in this war had been officers in the last.

They shared the risks and discomforts of life with the desert army to care for the wounded entirely. They supplied the 8th Army with some 500 ambulance drivers and ambulances. The latter were quite distinctive in that they were the AFS's own American four-wheel-drive Dodges, with the cocky Eagle emblem painted on the doors. They proved their worth when one company alone carried 4,000 patients in 66 ambulances in one month. During the Alamein battle and subsequent weeks the AFS carried 7,000 patients. It did the entire corps work for the 8th Army.

The AFS has also had its casualties. When Tobruk fell, it lost 10 per cent of its personnel. One unit had 100 per cent casualties at Bir Hacheim, when the surrounded Free French refused to surrender, after sixteen days of Axis shelling and bombing. The Free French fought their way out of the pocket, carrying their wounded with them to safety. More than one third of their ambulances had battle scars of one form or another.

In the subsequent theaters of war, more than a million casualties were moved from the front lines to first-aid stations and hospitals by these auxiliary troopers, 2,196 volunteers. They saved innumerable lives and their own casualties included 36 dead, 68 wounded, and 13 prisoners of war. They were praised and decorated by the commanding officers of all the Allied armies, as well as by the war leaders.

Although today their war work has long since been over, they have continued their operations as a peacetime organization with an international student exchange program. The outfit did a fine job in the war and the voluntary service it is doing for peace and good international relations is as brave and useful as the work it performed under enemy fire.



AN AFS VOLUNTEER

FOREWORD

CLIFF SABER'S art and keen observation gives a unique portrait of the 8th Army campaign.

The American Field Service, in which Cliff served as a volunteer, played its part in this army.

Cliff has portrayed the spectacular campaign with the vividness and reality which only one who took an active part could have done.

Seriously wounded himself — he has depicted the saving of lives under the difficult conditions of the Western Desert in a unique portrayal.

A brilliant piece of work by a true artist and a very brave and gallant man.

STEPHEN GALATTI
*Director General,
American Field Service*



AN AMERICAN GI



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PRELUDE: CONVOY TO WAR

THE BACKDROP of the whole war was the battle to keep open the sea lanes between the United States and Great Britain — the battle of the Atlantic. On the outcome of this battle all else depended.

The German's main weapon was the U-boat, which came into its own with a vengeance after the fall of France. Germany then controlled the whole 2,000-mile coast of Europe, including the French ports in the Bay of Biscay — ideal bases for U-boat attacks against Atlantic convoys.

With America's entry into the war in the winter of 1941-42 the U-boats concentrated their efforts in the Caribbean and on the Atlantic seaboard. Tremendous battles took place with sometimes thirty U-boats attacking a single convoy and killer groups of destroyers, frigates, corvettes, and air craft hunting them down. The U-boats failed to halt the vast movement of troops and arms from the United States to Britain. The battle of the Atlantic was won although it flared up several times before Germany finally surrendered.

MY ACQUAINTANCE with the American Field Service began in 1940 when I worked with a group of nationally known mural painters to raise funds for an AFS ambulance to be manned by volunteers in France. We had secured commissions to decorate the walls of the Café Français and the English Grill at Rockefeller Center, and we worked each night after closing time until the dining rooms were opened for lunch the following day. It was the first time such a group of professionals collaborated and worked side by side.

When the murals were completed a "Vive La France" Benefit unveiling was held on June 25 at the Promenade Café. Motion picture and television star Robert Montgomery spoke of the war overseas — he had just returned from France where he had been an American Field Service driver — and Lily Pons capped the festivities by singing the Marseillaise. It is ironic that France capitulated to Germany as Miss Pons was singing.



LAZY DAY

Six months later I was called to the colors, one of the first under Selective Service. I served eight months with the 29th Infantry, the guinea-pig regiment of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The type of training we received was far superior to and more rigorous than that which the regular army was then undergoing.

The army war-artists program had not yet been developed, but during my training period I saw the opportunities for reportorial painting. As a proving ground for the idea, I was soon executing countless portraits of draftees — pen-and-ink as well as water-color sketches — and these were exhibited at Atlanta, Georgia. I also developed a streamlined kit to use on maneuvers.

Under regulations in force before Pearl Harbor I could, if I wished, apply for temporary release from service. Before induction I had done experiments with lacquers, plastics, and batik dyes while engaged in mural work, and the experience had prompted me to write a thesis on camouflage. This, along with an application, I now sent through army channels to the Camouflage Division in Washington. At the request of Captain Russell Jenna, during the last few weeks before my actual release, I was able to decorate Company C's recreation room, with a mural and large water-color cartoons lampooning army life. Also, General Hazelitt, then colonel of the regiment, asked me to depict in murals the history of the regiment from its founding in the Philippines to its then status as a motorized division. I was able to paint two of these mural panels for the Fort's main recreation room during time off from regular duty.

Colonel Hazelitt had already recommended me for officers' training school, but I realized it would be nigh impossible as a commissioned infantry officer to transfer into camouflage or to become an army correspondent, at either of which jobs I felt better qualified to serve. Therefore, before Colonel Hazelitt's recommendation could be acted upon, I decided to accept a temporary release so that I might be free to establish myself along the lines I had been developing.

While waiting to hear from the Camouflage Division, I remembered the volunteer American Field Service which had been authorized by the War and State Departments and was operating with the British 8th Army in the Middle

East. Through Larry Barretto, Joan Belmont, and Director General Stephen Galatti I was accepted in the AFS and now had the opportunity for which I had sought and waited so long.

Compared to the peacetime air of the city in 1941, a trip to the AFS headquarters in New York transplanted one to the war itself. Men in and out of uniform were rushing about. Some were discussing the exploits of units then with the British and Free French; others were relating their experiences during the sinking of the *Zam Zam*, which had been torpedoed by a German sub; still others, myself among them, were anxiously preparing to ship out for the first time — having protective shots, getting papers in order, and sweating out the final word.

It was wonderful luck that I was assigned to Egypt for I knew something of the Arabs and spoke the language quite fluently. As a child I had learned it from my grandmother who came from Lebanon, and I was eager to put it to use. Although they were a bit rusty, I also had a fairly workable knowledge of school-taught French and German.

At the office of Bill Chessman, art editor for *Collier's* magazine, I met Frank Gervasi, a war correspondent who had successfully covered the Italian African campaigns and Il Duce's exploits. The meeting was arranged by a former art editor of *Collier's*, Major Stuart Benson of the Field Service, whose aide-de-camp I later became while on board ship. It was decided that I would do a series of paintings of the convoy en route and that I would contact either Gervasi or Quentin Reynolds, whichever one was in Cairo when I arrived.

The 16th American Field Service Unit sailed in a large convoy from Brooklyn, New York, in June 1942. Our boat, the *Selandia*, was a small but fast Danish cargo cruiser which was to take us as far as Capetown, South Africa. Here we were to board a second vessel, the *Nieuw Amsterdam*, a large luxury liner converted to an overcrowded troopship which had miraculously escaped a Jap attack at Singapore. It was sixty-eight days before we actually reached Port Tewfik, Egypt, our destination point.

Bayard Tuckerman of Boston was officer in charge and had as his assistant officers Major Stuart Benson and Captain Dunbar Hinricks, author and veteran of the AFS in World War I. There were ninety-six volunteers, mostly

college men. We wore Anglo-American uniforms, had identification bracelets showing our blood types, and carried passports and Geneva cards.

Among the volunteers many men, either had or were to experience severe hardships. Seventeen of them had already been on ships torpedoed twice in attempts to cross the Atlantic. One, Charlie Perkins, was taken prisoner in North Africa and shipped to Italy where he finally was exchanged as a prisoner of war. Six of the men, including myself, were wounded, and Caleb Milne and Henry Larner lost their lives in the line of duty.

Also aboard were Al Clemons, a Canadian-American teacher; Major Benjamin Stern, USMC, heading a group of civilians — two American State Department radio installation specialists; Byron Guerin; Herbert Davis; Dave Edwards; and two tight-lipped mysterious Yugoslavs, Tony and Vido. In Cairo I learned that Tony and Vido were guerrilla fighters and that Vido was the brother of Draza Mihajlovic, leader of the Chetniks.

Captain Vearing was skipper of the *Selandia* and was accompanied by his wife. She was rarely seen, however, and kept to herself in the captain's quarters on a veranda behind the bridge. It was unusual for a captain's wife to be aboard on such a trip, but she had signed on as secretary in order to meet war regulations. She was attractive, rather tall and slender, with brown hair and eyes, and the type of woman who could make a home wherever she found herself. On her veranda, which was shielded and surrounded by potted tropical plants and a palm tree, she had a dachshund and a bird cage with two canaries. By request I did a portrait of her.

During the voyage the crew was constantly on the alert — at the helm, in the engine room, and at the guns — for the safety of all depended on this as well as their skill and courage. The convoy was a large one, stretching out as far as the eye could see. The speed of the convoy was set by that of its slowest-moving ship, and its route hugged the Atlantic coast to Trinidad. Along the way were many red-flagged buoys marking half-sunken hulls of torpedoed ships. U. S. destroyers and Canadian corvettes interlaced the many Liberty cargo ships, tankers, and the *Selandia*. Now and then the sound of released depth charges could be heard and, if you were watching, their geyser sprays

were easy to see. Occasionally a navy patrol blimp or sea-plane soared vigilantly overhead. The ship's radio bulletin kept us informed of submarine activities around us and one time advised that we were in waters infested with enemy wolf packs. Not long after we passed this spot a ship actually was torpedoed there.

We stayed two days in Trinidad and then continued southward. Off the coast of Brazil we left the protection of the convoy and zigzagged our way alone across the Atlantic. We heard later over the wireless that an enemy raider had attacked and shelled the convoy shortly after we left it.

During this portion of the trip we drilled constantly to achieve efficiency in meeting any emergency with calmness. Divided into squads, we rotated watches, patrolling the blacked-out decks at night and squinting for periscopes during the day. In the event of an attack those on guard were to waken lifeboat captains who in turn were responsible for those assigned to their boats. Everyone carried his life jacket at all times and kept a small getaway bag with valuables and necessities handy.

En route I painted portraits of every AFS man on board and of other passengers. I had the men supply their own biographical sketches. In addition, I did a number of activity sketches which meant that I might paint at any hour and at any place, though I tried to do most of these in the afternoons or evenings.

Mornings were devoted to work, gunnery practice, lifeboat drill, first aid, map reading, language classes, and on Sundays — church. The latter lasted about an hour and was most impressive as it was conducted jointly by a Quaker, a Jew, a Baptist, a Moslem, an Episcopalian, and a Christian Scientist.

After lunch each day I taught an hour-long class in colloquial Arabic, with the aid of a book by DeLacy O'Leary and the secretarial help of "Boo Boo" Reynolds. In the desert I was elated to hear some of my former students putting their Arabic lessons to good use in bartering with and questioning the nomads.

Evening lectures were given during the voyage too. Major Stern spoke on the Marine Corps; Major Benson discussed the Field Service; the ship's South African doctor, Coenraad Pieters, gave us the do's and don'ts in Cape-



DECK TENNIS

town; and Vido talked on guerrilla warfare, demonstrating the art of killing a man at close range.

The uninterrupted normal routine on shipboard helped to ease the tension of the voyage and keep morale high. At times the voyage was reminiscent of a peacetime cruise. We had the run of the boat, food was excellent and plentiful, the weather pleasant enough for swimming and sunbathing, and there were sufficient entertaining activities. To top this, the bar opened on the evening of the third day and Jimmy McCarty, chief of the gun crew, became bartender. He kept his tin helmet under the bar with the glasses. Prices, too, were very reasonable: Scotch, 17 cents; beer, 10 cents; martinis, 10 cents; and cigarettes, 10 cents.

Off duty we sang every song we knew, played cards and deck tennis, and had the portable juke box playing hit records of the day: "Jingle, Jangle, Jingle," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You, Baby," and "Yours."

A group of us who played poker regularly became known as the "Dead-End Kids"; we were to remain together throughout the Western Desert campaign. There were Allan "Bull" Bowron, William "Wee Wee" Schorger,

John "Babe" Lund, Henry "Boo Boo" Reynolds, John "Spike" Himmel, Charles "Junior" Bachman, Hazen "Hazy" Hinman, Tom "Annie" Smith, and myself — popularly known as "Cue Ball." Upon request I sometimes did extra portraits of men to pay off my losses in the game.

At one o'clock on one of the blackest nights, while I was engrossed in a five-card stud poker game with Al, Hazy, Spike, Major Stern, Grafton Fay, and Ed Koenig, the torpedo alarm sounded. There was the sound of running feet on deck, and a deathly silence gripped us for a second as we looked at one another in bewilderment. Then Ed, the dealer, picked up the cards, dashed down to his cabin, grabbed his musette bag, trench coat, typewriter, file case, blanket roll, and life belt. The rest of us followed quickly, for everyone thought the ship had been hit. Twenty dollars remained forgotten on the table as we fled.

After a few minutes we learned it was a false alarm and the activity subsided. It seemed a slamming door had awakened an officer who had been torpedoed once before with another AFS unit and he lost no time in rousing the

whole ship. We gamblers returned to our table and calmly resumed our game — same dealer, same cards, and same twenty dollars.

Carl Adams of Wisconsin, later company clerk and now with the Associated Press, started a ship's newspaper — the *Torpedo Times*. He was its editor and George Lyon of Yale its publisher. However, it was not long before Carl lost his paper to Major Stern over a spurious libel suit involving an incident that had occurred in Trinidad. A mock trial was held with John Huntington of Boston and London as presiding judge. Major Stern presented his own case, assisted by Al Clemons; and William Elmslie, formerly attached to the British Embassy, was counsel for the defense. Adhering to strict legal procedure, the principals gave us a highly amusing evening. The major took over publication of the paper with leatherneck efficiency, set up an editorial staff, and appointed me art editor. On another evening a risqué musical extravaganza entitled *Tuckerman Forbid* was presented to a most enthusiastic audience, including the captain and his wife (the latter attended in the guise of a seaman). This costume production of skits and songs was co-authored by Ed Fenton, art expert and bookshop owner (later, on three separate occasions, he walked away unscathed from vehicles which had been blown up under him), and Arthur Jeffries, a survivor of the *Zam Zam* sinking.

It was winter when we arrived in Capetown, just the reverse of our own climate. As we entered the harbor we saw the red-roofed city nestled snugly amid imported semi-tropical vegetation against the rugged bare slopes of Table Mountain. This mesa overlooked a bay famous for its lobsters and now filled with gray-camouflaged ships whose launches droned like busy bees between the piers and the ships.

Some of us were based at the British military camp while others stayed at hotels in town. The South Africans, whose sons and husbands were up north fighting, were most hospitable and wine and dined transient soldiers in their homes. The homes were comfortable and well furnished, but lacked heating systems. Overcoats were worn indoors as well as out and, strange as it may seem, the South Africans rarely had colds.

While in Capetown I became acquainted for the first

time with our Allied forces from New Zealand, India, South Africa, Ireland, Scotland, and England. Soldiers en route or on leave are alike the world over: confident, mischievous, and happy-go-lucky. In town they move from one night spot to another, but no spot ever satisfies them for long. Such places are always dark, dingy, and jammed with other soldiers drinking bad liquor at high prices. Also, the soldiers outnumbered the female population and men were often seen dancing with one another for lack of women partners.

Finally we sailed from Capetown aboard the *Nieuw Amsterdam* — large, fast, and far too crowded. Life on board was a continuation of that on the *Selandia*, but on a larger scale and with more military restrictions. I still held my Arabic classes regularly but the class was reduced in number from seventy to thirty — the men had new distractions and activities now. The only regular assemblies on shipboard were occasional lifeboat drills.

We stopped at the port of Durban, not to disembark but to take on James Ramsey Ullman's group of five AFS men who had been at sea aboard a freighter for three months and who were now joining our unit. Ullman was browned-off (slightly mad) from lying aboard ship five weeks off the coast of South Africa, but he began to fade to a more normal tone after a short period on this "luxury" liner.

We continued northward and through the Red Sea where the weather became unmercifully hot. The ship had 6,000 aboard and we were twelve men to a cabin. It was like sleeping in a boiler room, and many migrated to the overcrowded deck to catch a nap where they could.

Nick Parrino, World Wide News and OWI photographer, and I competed in recording activities on board. I painted portraits of Flight Commander Steele of the RAF; Captain Ole Oleson of Kansas, the oldest active pilot in the USAAF; Colonel Dassonville, Free French War Minister — to mention a few. I also interviewed Colonel Dassonville with the help of "Boo Boo" Reynolds who took the comments down in shorthand.

On Sunday, September 6, 1942, we arrived at long last at Port Tewfik, Egypt, where East meets West. I had painted about two hundred pictures, many of which were given away, but 160 of which were prepared for shipment to the States.



DAWN



PORT TEWFIK, EGYPT — "WE'RE HERE!"



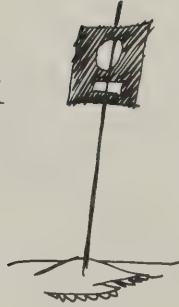
SKETCH BOOK





14TH LFA — ADVANCED DRESSING STATION

Chapter 1



INTO BATTLE I

*The enemy is now attempting to break through...and drive us from Egypt.
The Eighth Army bars the way ...We will fight the enemy where we now
stand; there will be NO WITHDRAWAL and NO SURRENDER ...Into
battle then, with stout hearts and with the determination to do our duty.*

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S *dispatch to the troops,*
Alamein, August 1942



567 ACC — THE CHICKEN

AT PORT TEWFIK we were met aboard ship by Colonel Ralph Richmond of Boston, officer in charge of the entire American Field Service in the Middle East, accompanied by Major Stuart Benson, second in command, and Captain Dunbar Hinricks. The latter two had accompanied our 16th Volunteer Unit as far as Capetown, South Africa, and then had flown up ahead to Cairo. With them were desert veterans of Auchinleck's Push, Captain Andrew Geer, AFS, in charge of a company in the field, Lieutenant Art Howe, AFS, and Lieutenant Daniel Goodman of the British forces.

In the early afternoon, we were packed into open lorries at the pier, our baggage into others, and the officers into a vacant Dodge ambulance. We sped through the edge of the city and the desert wastes of Egypt bordering the Suez Canal, the man-made artery connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. As we rode along we could see this much-covered short-cut strip of blue water in the Middle East, key to the vast oil deposits hidden beneath its surrounding sands, which was so vital to the British Imperial lifeline, the Allied Lend-Lease line to Russia, and the goal of the Afrika Korps which came so close to taking it.

While we drove — all afternoon — I stood up, along with others, fascinated and hypnotized by this burning country — its aroma, its sights, and the thought that this was Egypt, site of many conquests and the birth of civilization. And of personal interest to me was a town called Tanta where one of my grandmothers was born, and Alexandria where my grandfather had owned a tobacco factory before the turn of the century.

The afternoon was broiling hot with the air rising in hazy wavy lines off the sand and the light glaring down through the luminous dust with an unearthly quality. As we moved northward past Ismalia and then west, the air grew hotter and even the tearing breeze burned as it cooled.

Occasionally palm and eucalyptus trees lined the tarred highway which shimmered with mirages; donkeys trotted by with beany-capped riders straddling them, camels loaded with bales of straw loped along guided or ridden by their nightshirted drivers, and women in loose black dust-collect-

ing gowns followed or filed by, their eyes mascara'd with kohl like those of their Pharaonic ancestors.

As the road stretched onward, lorries and battle equipment lumbered by in convoys, indicating camps ahead. We passed several troop punishment camps and heavily barbed-wired Italian and German prison yards where, at each corner, wooden towers housed armed guards.

Women with baskets or jugs on their heads, men with bundles on their backs passed by, as we drove along the Sweetwater Canal, built years before Christ between the Red Sea and the Nile. Dhows, huge canvas-sail flat wooden barges, plied up and down the brown water, pulled by ropes from its banks by the fellaheen (natives), who occasionally stood nude, bathing and evacuating.

Every sun-hammered inch along the waterway was made to produce wheat, corn, cotton, and other crops. These were irrigated by pumping wheels turned by human feet or blind oxen. The fellaheen tilled the soil with rough tree croches pulled by animals or men or women. This was the Nile delta unfolding strangely before our American eyes, a narrow strip of fertile land, primitively cultivated and inadequate for the overpopulated, diseased, starving people under Farouk's regime.

Before we arrived at our destination, we came to an intersection with signs boldly lettered in Arabic and English. One read, "To Tanta." I never did get to that city or town — I don't know which — but I would have liked to have paid a visit there.

We finally arrived at our training camp, El Tahag, in the desert about sixty miles from Cairo. Mile upon mile of this transit camp, where the 8th Army was reorganizing, training units, and supplying its war machine, was covered with endless rows of tents, trucks, water tanks; there were tent roofs roped to the sand as far as the eye could see. We were met by our training officers, veterans of Tobruk, Benghazi, and the rest of the Western Desert. Among them was an old high-school buddy, Scotty Gilmore from Greenwich, Connecticut.

After some enthusiastic greetings, talk of home, and war rumors, we were shown our barracks. Each man was handed a set of mimeographed sheets which combined information about the AFS in the Middle East and the 11th AFS Ambulance Car Company active in the field in Syria

and the Western Desert. As we read this information, an AFS cashier arrived in camp to supervise the first of the monthly payments to the new men and to handle other monetary matters. We were told by our officers to buddyup and grab an EPIP (English patent Indian product), a tent which would house eight men including a desert-veteran NCO. My gang (the "Dead-End Kids") from aboard ship was split up temporarily but soon reunited after the housing problem was solved.

The tent barracks were scattered unevenly upon the desert, not too close and not too far from each other. Each EPIP tent was twenty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide. Inside, two thick bamboo poles supported the top-line burden of the roof, the sides of which swooped down to meet the five-foot-high canvas walls. Some of the walls were removed or rolled up, leaving a huge umbrella. On the sandy floor were strewn British-issue straw mattresses and our own ambulance stretchers and sleeping bags. Outside, the bamboo poles and roof ends were roped to pegs in the sand, giving the appearance of a land-locked octopus.

The ground was soft as velvet and fine as talcum. The slightest breeze sifted this golden dust bowl into your very privacy, and nothing and nobody escaped its penetration.

Being Major Benson's aide-de-camp, I picked a tent at random to store my home-bought gear before reporting to him for leave in order to put the finishing touches on my painted, captioned convoy sketches, to arrange their shipment to the States, and to get on with my proposed meeting with *Collier's* war correspondent Frank Gervasi in Cairo. Major Benson was in a conference with Captain Geer, Captain Hinricks, Grafton Fay, and James Ramsay Ullman. The last three were convoy unit leaders who relinquished their command upon arrival in Egypt.

When the meeting was over, Major Benson informed me that a new ambulance car company of over a hundred ambulances was being formed while 11th Company still operated in the battle area. Although I had had eight months of infantry soldiering at Fort Benning, Georgia, there was an important difference between that and driver training in the desert under combat conditions; the latter was something to be learned not by verbal instruction or lectures but by experience. My leave was postponed till after this training was completed.



*British Field Kitchen for A.F.S.
 Billad Taber A.F.S.
 19/9/42*

BRITISH FIELD KITCHEN

I went back to check my gear, which consisted of a feather-down sleeping bag, a duffle bag containing the basic needs of desert life, a musette bag containing things for immediate use, and a specially designed large zippered-top leather portfolio.

This last was my walking studio; it stored two years' supply of art materials. It had a leather handle for carrying and a detachable strap hooked to two metal rings fastened with leather to the top sides which allowed the weight to be carried from the shoulder. Inside the case a leather partition separated unused paper and sketch books from my finished work of the Atlantic crossing. These, to date, had exhausted half my supply of materials. Sewn to the outside center of the case was a rectangular zippered pocket which held miniature water-color boxes, ink, pencils, and brushes.

I kept a watchful eye on the whereabouts of my portfolio; so did the rest of the gang. Despite all the scrounging that soldiers do, not one painting was rifled en route or throughout the desert chase that ensued — although somebody did swipe two egg-laying hens that "Wee Wee" Schorger and I owned jointly.

Wendel "Bill" Nichols was in the tent when I entered. He was tall, blond, wiry built and sun-toasted well over to a healthy brown that melted into the color of his heavy crepe-soled boots (those desert trodders which were to become the height of men's fashions after the war). He wore a porous sandy-green shirt opened at the chest and tucked into his khaki Bermuda shorts which were cut so high at the sides he reminded me of a track athlete. With a cordial infectious smile, he introduced himself as the NCO of the tent.

During a session of crossfire questions and answers about home and desert life, Scotty Gilmore dropped in with Jupe Lewis. Both were NCO's. I had known Scotty had come over with the first contingent; he had heard I had inquired about him, and it was a happy reunion. He hadn't changed much since our high-school days except that he appeared much taller, his head redder, his freckles more populous, and his wit sharpened more keenly by the desert winds. We started a gab-fest about the old gang at home. Jupe — tall, dark brown-headed, and silent — and Bill just listened to our small talk about gals, guys,

dances, dice games at his house, parties at mine, and the whereabouts of old friends. Our joyous reminiscing, typical of thousand of meetings during the war, probably bored the other two mightily.

This monopolizing of the conversation was cut short when one of the others suggested skipping mess and going to the NAAFI (British soldiers' canteen) for food and the garrison cinema attached to it.

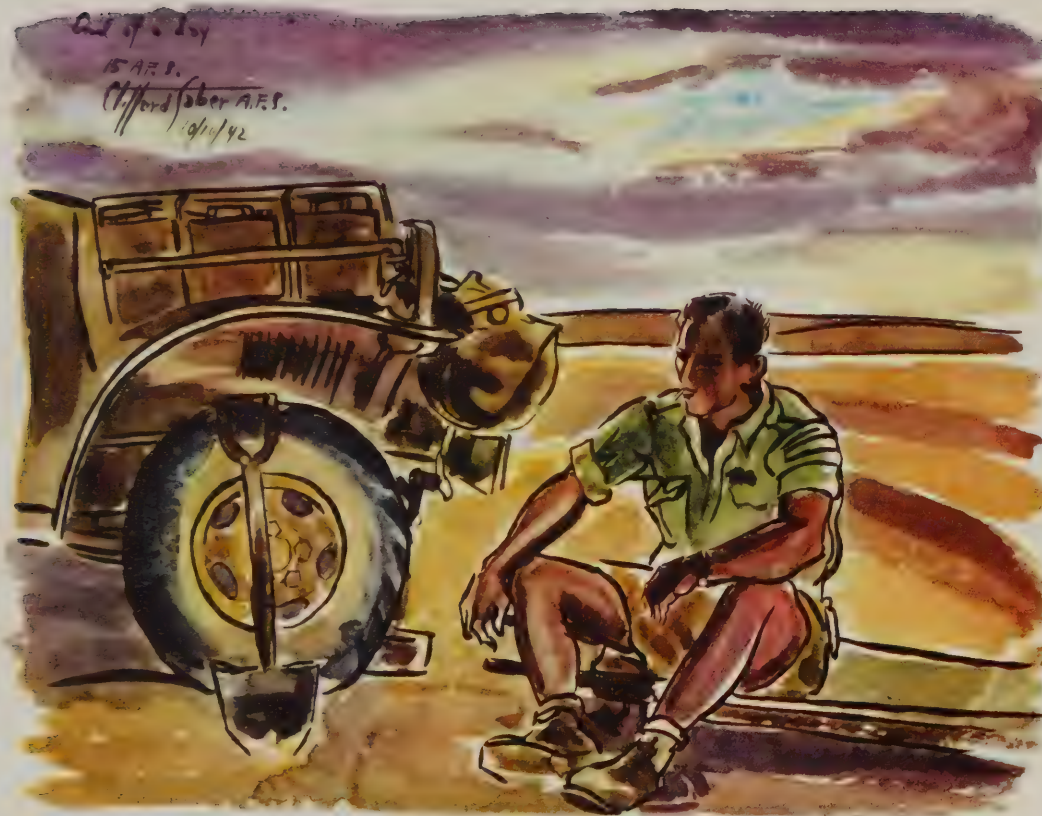
It had got dark by the time we sauntered into the crowded, dust-covered social MOB (mobilization center) tent of the 8th Army. The air was stale and heavy with smoke. An artist's storehouse is his memory. My mind was stocking up pictorial material as fast as a calculating machine. I severed myself from the personal conversation and just looked.

Here were the vari-tongued and many-hued fighting men from all over the world, sand dusted, scrambling and pushing to purchase relaxation at the long counters; excited players and their cheering fans competing boisterously at several dart games; and a group clustered around a wireless listening to a broadcast from home. This was the only time I was to see such a congregation in one spot throughout my whole desert experience. Cockneys, Welchmen, Cornish, Scots, and even Irish from the United Kingdom; Kiwis from New Zealand; Aussies or Diggers from Australia; Dutch and English South Africans; Free French; native troops like Maoris from New Zealand, the Kaffir from South Africa, the Gurkhas, Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs from India, the Basutos from Egypt; volunteer groups of Poles, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Palestinians; and a few Americans, technicians and ourselves.

These were the men who had been in the public eye from the beginning of the desert fighting in 1940 when the 8th Army was formed as a Franco-British expeditionary force under the joint command of Generals Wegand and Wavell. When France capitulated, Wavell was left with a small force outnumbered five to one by the Italians who made their "Grand Attack" in contemplation of an easy passage through Egypt; but the "desert force," as it was then known, stood fast for three months. It was reinforced by the 7th Armoured Division, the original "Desert Rats," the force which was renamed the "Army of the Nile." The odds against them were cut down to two to one. Wavell



POKER PLAYER HANK BONNER



END OF A DAY

attacked, embarrassing the Italians by making so many captures. He was halfway to Tripoli when he had to split his army and go to the assistance of Greece. Rommel entered the picture with his panzer divisions and drove the Army of the Nile back to its starting point. Auchinleck took over the newly named 8th Army, and held Rommel at bay till he was relieved by its new commander, General Bernard Montgomery.

The acorns of griff (gossip) that floated through the air to my eavesdropping ears concerned Montgomery and Rommel. Some said their new field commander was a puritan, a stickler for regimentation, a religious fanatic, a showman but a good military man. Others said he was a man who, prewar, had known Rommel personally in Germany during some maneuvers in which they had jointly participated. He undoubtedly knew the Fox's tricks backwards and forwards. As for Rommel, they all wished he was on their side; they respected him. They claimed he owed his desert victories to the fact that he had known the desert before the campaigns; he had supposedly been on an Egyptian archeological expedition in the thirties. King Farouk was the lowest of the low and pro-Axis. The Egyptian army was stagnant — did nothing except theoretically protect its country.

In this absorbing melee, one thought kept running through my mind. How in hell am I going to record all this? Where do I start — limited as I am in the scope of my meanderings among the troops?

A bottle of South African beer was shoved into my hands by Scotty and we convoyed ourselves by foot through the maze of Allies to the movie.

The movie screen was out-of-doors behind a large wooden stage, and dialogue appeared in three or four languages. An American musical was showing — vintage eight years — with a tinny sound track. French subtitles were on the actual film while to the side of the main screen was another, smaller screen on which was projected a running translation of the American slang in Arabic and Greek. The American double talk was both comical and intricate in the translations. Several times the interpreters just gave up and made no attempt at translation.

When the projector broke down, beer bottles flew and crashed against the wood of the stage and a good-natured

riot nearly started. A newsreel on life in the Western Desert began lauding the soldiers for "their indomitable courage, their perseverance in the face of tremendous odds." The extravagant praise was greeted with cat calls. These desert men didn't feel very heroic; they just wanted to get it over with and get home.

As I lay sleepless on my bag that night contemplating the training I was to undergo prior to entering the checker-board fighting west of there, remembering the live-ammo maneuvers I had participated in at the Fort Benning Infantry School, thinking about the spasms of war and the emotional sensations I was to experience now directly in combat, I solved my painting-recording dilemma. Any accurate written recollection was nigh impossible and subject to nostalgic fictionalizing. Consequently my plan was to complete a picture a day regardless of how heavy my Field Service duties were. What I couldn't paint, I would write about at night before retiring.

I would use one sketch book to portray the monotonous daily existence of our lives, a soldier's point of view, familiar to all; this would embody the army's medical and transportation system and when it was pieced together would give the graphic whole. As for portraying the blood and guts of warfare in paint, this was impossible; it would be ably photographed by assigned and capable cameramen. My pictures would have to suggest the personal hell of it to each man, as well as the day-to-day things he would rather remember.

A second sketch book would contain portraits of every desert fighting man I saw — if and when I could get to them.

Early the next morning training for our Bedouin existence began with a greeting and lecture by Captain "Andy" Geer, who had been second in field command of 11th AFS Car Company and now was forming and organizing his own company, the 15th AFS Car Company. He was a mahogany-red weather-beaten desert veteran, a dead ringer in looks for Dick Tracy. Before volunteering in the first unit over, he had been a magazine writer, bronco buster, and San Francisco Bridge construction worker; he had played football for the University of Minnesota and was its boxing champion for two years. He had picked his own NCO's from the desert group to form two platoons of 15th



AFS PAYDAY



WILLIAM "BUCK" KAHLO

Company. We greenhorns took to him like ducks to water. He was later to leave us, and wound up as a Marine Corps major in the South Pacific, author of many books on his experiences and a scenario writer of note for several hit movies based on his exploits.

He told us about the location of the camp, meal hours, sick call, daily routines, camp cleanliness, dress, natives, washing and bathing, security, gas masks, photography, vehicle discipline, and church services. He ran through the whole gamut of his desert knowledge and then issued his standing orders.

When I saw him later at his headquarters tent, we discussed the possibilities of an insignia for the company. We decided to run an art contest and posted notice of it for those who had the appropriate talents.

Our conversation was interrupted by the noise of an approaching motorcycle whose engine continued to race after it stopped. Through the open flap of the tent sauntered a veteran of Tobruk, blond mustached Company Sergeant Wayne McMeekan, pulling his goggles up high on his head. Wayne too was to return to the States after his enlistment. At home and universally, he was to become better known as David Wayne, an accomplished stage and motion-picture star. I left them to go draw my British-issue clothing and equipment.

During the formative fourteen days of intensive desert training, the RASC (Royal Army Service Corps) assigned to our two platoon companies a workshop unit headed by Captain Webb, a small courteous Yorkshireman better known as "Webby," through whose untiring efforts our units were supplied and enabled to do an unfaltering job. We were given field kitchens with cooks, sanitation men, and a passive air-defense unit (anti-aircraft machine guns were used only if ambulances or hospitals were attacked).

The condensed training program ended with an inspection of cars and men by the well-liked British Brigadier Walker, DDMS (Deputy Director of Medical Services), accompanied by AFS headquarters officers. We were royally dubbed — 15th AFS, 567th ACC — with Andy Geer as captain, Evan Thomas, son of Norman Thomas, and Art Howe, college professor, first and second platoon lieutenants respectively.

The ambulance platoon had six subsections. In each,



MAINTENANCE

eight men, five drivers, a spare driver, a driver mechanic, and an NCO in charge, had the responsibility for five ambulances. This basic pattern enabled subsections to be attached separately as a unit or individually to many forward units of the 8th Army and finally to service an entire corps in the field.

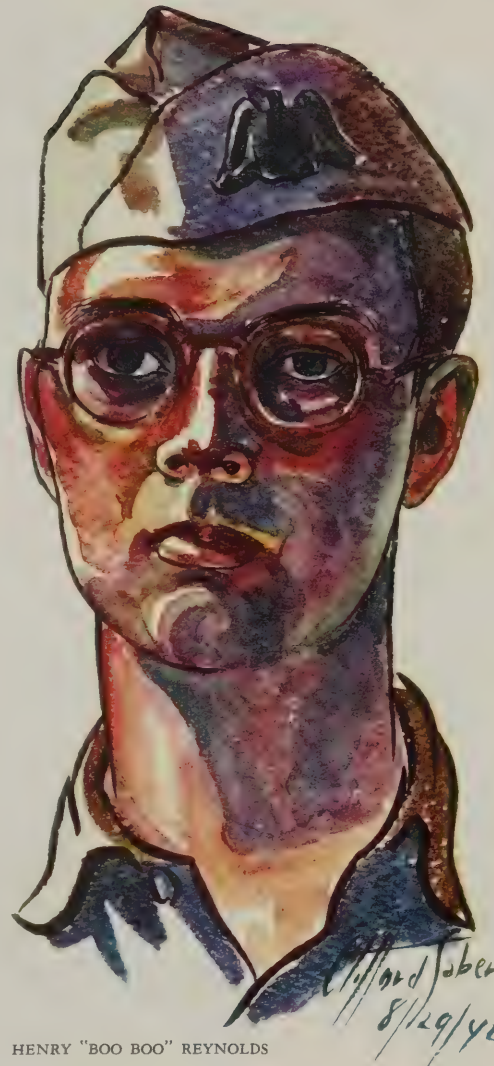
Training each day on the old battlefield of Tel el Kebir where the British defeated Arabi Pasha's forces in 1882, we gathered for lectures on navigation and convoy driving, ambulance maintenance, the British army medical system, army Bedouin life, and land mines. And each day with college-type cramming, trial method and practice, we mastered the contents of these lectures which were given by English and American veterans. This all-important know-how involved not only the safety of our lives but, most important, the lives of the transported wounded.

To double-clutch drive in the Western Desert was an art in itself. The terrain was a flat, treeless, desolate panorama that kept repeating itself. It wasn't the exciting sand dunes and oases portrayed by Hollywood. Upon intrusion, it revealed a treacherous mixture of soft sand spots, hard stretches of lava-gravel surfaces, escarpments formed by miles of stretched-out wadis (dried-up water beds), and the added plus of the hidden explosive mines in its folds.

Our sandy-white ambulances were Dodges, designed for the United States Army. They carried a maximum of four stretcher cases or nine or ten sitting cases which were the requirements of all ambulances in the field. Their four-wheel drives eliminated the need for sand channels. These were two perforated strips of steel five feet long by fourteen inches wide. When a vehicle bogged down in the sand, channels were placed beneath the rear wheels for a pull-out runway. Staff and lighter cars usually carried canvas that produced the same results.

The ambulance was boldly marked with red crosses on the roof, sides, and rear doors for aerial and ground identification. Six gallons each of gasoline and water were kept in racks attached to the sides and bedding rolls were usually strapped to the front fenders to keep the interior free for patients. Both side doors displayed the recognizable company badge — a cocky red-cross eagle with an Uncle Sam hat.

Although smaller and more compact than the roomier



HENRY "BOO BOO" REYNOLDS

heavier British Bedford and Austin ambulances, the Dodges took to the long tedious duty runs and convoys like a steadfast camel caravan — and like lone racing camels returned at high speeds over bombed roads and tracks and often across unknown country naturally dangerous for vehicles. They were as tough and rough as this wind-swept terrain, and ideal for the work they did with armored units. Their mechanical endurance contest started before Alamein and lasted through the final runs in Berlin.

As many of us were to transport wounded alone, to get lost in this sea of sand was not just a misfortune but a grave mistake. Subsequently all desert navigation was done by sun and prismatic compass. After being adjusted for longitude, time of year, and time of day, the sun compass was the most accurate for getting to and from destinations. The 24-hour prismatic compass, which was carried inside the car on the dashboard, varied and was affected by the inherent magnetism of the motor and the jarring of the vehicle; consequently corrections had to be applied at intervals to every change of position of the ambulance.

The daily navigation routine used by every man in this mechanized army included the all-important map, the distance from starting point to destination, the speedometer reading, the landmark-star compass bearings, and the magnetic deviation of the prismatic compass.

Simply, you picked a star low on the horizon for a bearing two degrees less than your compass course; you got into the vehicle and from the selected position you aligned the car and chalk marked on the windshield a fixed landmark in front of you in relation to the picked star. Keeping the landmark and star in line — you moved. As the stars changed their positions in relation to the earth, it was necessary to repeat your compass-bearing identification.

For convoy driving the British supplies covered every emergency that would arise on a trip; three days' battle rations per man were carried in each vehicle, fresh water was carried in every available container, sufficient petrol was issued with eighteen gallons carried in reserve, as it was rarely drawn en route at petrol points (storage depots).

The density of the convoy was twenty vehicles to the mile or a good eighty yards between vehicles; the speed was a slow twenty-five miles an hour or less. For security, personnel were not allowed to discuss their journey with



THOMAS "ANNIE" SMITH

anyone outside their unit and written destination orders were destroyed by fire upon completion of a mission.

With the exception of the lead car, each driver in convoy was guided by the car ahead. At night driving was extremely tricky. Your range of vision was about thirty yards although you could distinguish the horizon which was miles away. Because of this, the car ahead seemed habitually to drop completely out of sight even on a fairly level stretch. Traveling in a straight line meant that you went through desert obstacles without being prepared for them. Slowing down, speeding up, or shifting gears, you kept the car ahead in sight, which was no easy task, especially when it ran into loose sand and slowed down. After it pulled through, it would speed through the night to catch up to the convoy, while you were left in the sand. In order to overtake it, it was your turn to step on the gas, leaving somebody else cussing behind you to shift for himself. However, nobody was ever really lost for he usually had a low star sighted to drive by when outdistanced by the car ahead.

The British devised a most practical method for the maintenance of vehicles; it was fondly referred to as the "sixteen tasks." This did not mean sixteen things had to be checked every month but that one of these tasks had to be done daily — for instance, all oil levels had to be kept up, filters cleaned, body bolts tightened, and spring shackles oiled and greased so that they would not freeze. All this was dated and recorded in the so-called "412" diary of the vehicle. This neatly ruled itemized sheet book told all — from the tools carried to the machine feedings of gas and oil. Twice a month all cars were given a "412" inspection by British workshops. With oil as the god of war, it was this method of care that enabled all vehicles to stand up to a successful victory. On the same principle that the infantry prized their Garands and Springfields — so we prized our Dodges which were procured by donations at home.

You measured time in the sands of Allah by the heat of the sun, the number of hours you worked in this heat, and the things which happened or did not happen or were to happen. You lived fast for a moment and then everything and everybody suddenly changed tempo and nothing moved and nothing happened. You got the feeling that



WILLIAM "WEE WEE" SCHORGER



ALLAN "BULL" BOWRON

life wanted to move but time, Father Time, wouldn't let it. Boredom set in!

One diversion was the card game. Every conceivable game and its variations according to the book was played and some suspect on-the-spot variations so confusing that the originators turned out to be the only winners. The favorite of the Tommy was pontoon, a version of the universal game of twenty-one, known in France as *vingt-et-un* and in America as blackjack. However, the game we played at the drop of a hat was our own old American standard — poker.

There is a popular misconception that poker, since it is a gambling game, is a matter of pure luck. Actually nothing could be further from the truth. It is a game of management ability — which reveals the conduct and character of a player.

Poker has more interesting angles than a beautiful model and the right to any advantage you can gain short of actual cheating. By its very nature it is a game of wile and artifice. Psychologically it was a binding influence and responsible for friendships which formed Subsection 10 of 567th ACC, referred to by the rest of the Field Service as the "Dead-End Kids," the gamblers.

As poker players, the "Kids" fell into the three classes: the ingenuous player who acted the way he felt, the coffee-houser who acted the way he did not feel, and the unreadable player who had no consistency, a hard opponent who invariably knew all the rules of correct play but departed from them on occasion.

Together from one end of North Africa to the other, we came to know each other's way of playing. There was:

"Bull" — Al Bowron, from New England, a home development builder, who earned his college education working and playing bridge and poker. He was a suave, loquacious, unreadable player — so loquacious he talked me out of my spare tire when we chanced to meet coming from opposite directions in a tire-killing wadi; luckily I had no patients and was heading for workshops.

"Spike" — Jack Himmel, from Buffalo, New York, now in department store management, a phlegmatic unreadable player with a mathematical mind. He had a charmed life. During the breakthrough at Alamein, he and Bull were working forward with an armored brigade. Leaguered for



JOHN "SPIKE" HIMMEL



CHARLES "JUNIOR" BACHMAN

the night, he forsook his cold damp slit trench for the comfortable needed sleep in the ambulance. At daylight, a few minutes after he crawled out of his sleeping bag, an enemy air attack struck the unit. Spike hit the slit trench like a hammer, a few seconds before an anti-personnel bomb landed a few feet away from him. His ambulance was jagged-holed and his sleeping bag was riddled like a sieve.

"Hazy" — Hazen Hinman, from Rome, New York, and in the steel business, the taciturn unreadable player who dispersed his vehicle according to regulations and then some; to contact him required navigation. He saw more action than he cared to discuss which was typical of the men under fire.

"Wee Wee" — Bill Schorger, from Madison, Wisconsin, a Doctor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, the loquacious, coffee-house player. When Jerry was just a step ahead of the 8th Army, it wasn't unusual for AFS drivers to go into towns with the first advancing troops. Wee Wee managed to get in with the 11th Hussars, the Cherry Pickers, and was the first American in the fifth vehicle into Tripoli. His recounting of this tale became more and more elaborate and exciting until he almost had himself driving the lead car into that key port city.

"Junior" — Charles Bachman, from Chicago, now an executive with an international wheat cartel in Europe, the erudite ingenious player. At Agheila, Junior had the misfortune of being trapped for forty-eight hours by shelling 88's from an enemy artillery pocket overlooked by the 8th Army in its rapid advance to get at the main body of the Afrika-Korps. He had been forgotten by his LFA (light field ambulance) unit when they fled the area to get out of range of the guns. He overcame the "bomb-happy" shock after hospital treatment and carried on to the end of the campaign. The suffix "happy" is slang for "crazy."

"Babe" — John Lund, another New Englander, now president of an envelope company, an esthetic coffee-house player. Halfway through the mad LFA flight at Agheila, he turned back into the shell fire with the major of the unit, recovered a broken-down staff car, chained it to his ambulance, and towed it to safety.

"Boo Boo" — Henry Reynolds, who hailed from Hartford, Connecticut; he had a sense of humor as precise and whizzy as his shorthand writing. His nickname was de-



JOHN "BABE" LUND

rived from an attempt to scare somebody out of a pot with five aces. Today he is a building contractor. He was a gullible coffee-houser.

"Annie" — Tom Smith, also from Hartford, the enthusiastic ingenious player. His favorite song was "Annie Doesn't Live Here Any More" — when he lost his chips in a game.

"Cue Ball" — me. I got the name after shaving my head aboard. The less said about me the better.

It took our whole training period to gradually accept the strange standard of living in the desert. We lived out of our duffle bags and dressed in dirty khaki. An Arab laundry took in our washing but returned it dirtier than when we gave it out. The latrines were Arab style — seatless. Every other day we would file off to the relief of rationed showers. It was satisfying under the spray but by the time you wended your way back a mile or so to your tent you were back in the same hot, sultry stew.

Always in the distance was the dancing of the smoky, spiral, small twisters. Every time I saw one of these or felt its hot, stifling, sucking breath, it reminded me of a Maxwell Parrish painting in the *Arabian Nights*, Aladdin finding the magic lamp and the Genie spiraling out of it. These whirling dervishes of air suction were something to contend with for they played havoc with the tents and equipment, almost taking one over the rainbow.

Captain Andy Geer took pride in his new company and to set it apart from 11th Company, my esprit de corps badge, the wild, cocky, bald-headed eagle wearing an Uncle Sam hat against a red-cross background was selected in the competition.

The execution of this design on over a hundred ambulances followed the pattern of a Detroit assembly line. First I made a perforated-cardboard stencil of the design. With the help of others, I pounced the perforated-cardboard design onto the ambulance doors with a bag of charcoal powder. Then everybody chipped in; one applied the white fill, another the yellow, and still another the red and blue. When they tired, others replaced them. With the help of George Lyon and Bill Eberhard, both graduates of the Yale Art School, I did the finished outline in black. In eight hours we put an eagle on every vehicle, much to the amazement of the Tommies.



HAZEN "HAZY" HINMAN

11th Company was so envious of our 15th Company badge, they dubbed us "Geer's Chicken Brigade" and the name stuck. With new Dodge ambulances added to the company and weather-beaten insignias having to be repainted without a stencil, the eagles took on many different expressions — some laughed, some scowled, some sneered, and some just looked bewildered. Ours was the first unit to originate an AFS flash (insignia), with others following suit in Italy and Burma.

From Alamein to Tunis, in one month alone, 567th ACC carried ten thousand casualties. In that month they drove close to 106,000 miles. Upon their record the "Chickens" could well afford to strut — they never laid an egg.

Charles "Snazz" Snead, a Texan and former Yale football player, joined our midst with twenty new volunteers. He and his overseas unit were to join Captain Marsh, commanding officer of 11th Company in the Western Desert. Snazz transferred to our unit, while the rest joined our rival company. Johnny Eyed was among them. I had met him in Capetown. He was an Abadab (a pet name used by second-generation Lebanese-Americans for each other). Johnny could have played the title role in Eugene O'Neill's *Hairy Ape* and at the same time explained Einstein's Theory of Relativity. He started out to be an anthropologist but wound up at the head of his own advertising agency. Another one of the group was Chuck O'Neill, a law student and orchestra leader. His enthusiastic sense of humor livened many an evening under a canvased truck. Canvas became so much a part of him that today he manufactures the stuff with his own special process.

The night before our only Cairo leave prior to entering the fighting zone — the leave was so brief that a bikini bathing suit would cover more territory — we had several poker games going in an EPIP tent. I got into a game with some of the "Kids," Snazz, Johnny Eyed and Scotty Gilmore. A few games were always started up before we went into a town, for the usual reason — extra cash for a spree. I did all right in the game and came out ahead of Scotty after not having played with him for ten years.

Cairo stretches out on both sides of the Nile just north of where the river splits into the many nourishing streams which feed the delta. Wealthy Cairenes who spoke more

French than Arabic bragged about their modernistic German-designed apartments and homes which were situated along the river banks, on the thin island of Gezireh, on houseboats, and in the suburbs of Heliopolis, Maadi and Helwan. The fellaheen, who comprise 12 of Egypt's 16 million people, live around and among them in dirty tenements and mud huts, sharing these quarters with their beasts of burden. Strangely, except for their antagonism to the soldiers, they were a polite, courteous, and contented people. I had never seen such a gap between great wealth and indescribable poverty. It was a city of intrigue, sufficiently eastern for the curiosity of a westerner, and western enough to make him at home.

When I arrived, the capital was taking the war lightly with a "plague on both your houses" attitude. Its only concession to the war was the moonlight blue of street lamps that would have horrified an air-raid warden.

Spending was a form of escapism with the multi-uniformed troops who made the streets colorful; they filled the pockets of shopowners, nightclub waiters, dragomen, and beggars of every description. Persistent glabayah hawkers sidled up to you trying to sell everything from bicycles to "bints" (girls). The natives were called "nightshirts," "laundry bags," "wogs" (for wily old gentleman), or "Gippies" (Egyptians).

Added to the hubbub of the fellaheen was the Arabic music screaming from Turkish coffee houses, the honking of taxi drivers who were helpless without a hand on the horn, and the nerve-racking bells of bicycle drivers. To top it all were fellaheen bagpipers swinging the "St. Louis Blues."

The project uppermost in my mind in this tempting, distracting Paris of the Middle East was to put the finishing touches on the convoy series, mail them home, and see Frank Gervasi who was staying at Shepherd's Hotel.

As rooms were hard to get in town I used my Arabic at the Continental Savoy Hotel with Abdullah, the assistant manager, to procure a double room for John Harmon and myself. I got it all right but only after giving Abdullah sufficient baksheesh. This substantial tip brought the baksheesh plague of his family upon me. I don't know how many kids he had or acquired for the occasion but I do know I should have kept quiet.



JOHN HARMON

John Harmon, now a minister, had been the model for one of my large AFS posters that hung in the New York headquarters. He sat up with me both nights of the brief two-day leave and typed the synopsis and copy for the volume of paintings I sent back to the States where they were exhibited at the Society of Illustrators. Practically the only sight we saw of this halfway house between Asia and Europe was the Victorian wallpaper of our high-ceilinged hotel room. I was and still am most grateful to him for his time-saving help.

The Continental, noted for its roof dancing, faced the Egyptian Opera House square. It was the sister hotel to the late riot-burned Shepherds on the same side of the street, Sharia Abraham. Oddly enough Arounai's Importing House was in a block between the two much-publicized hotels. I had known the Arounais, Lebanese Cairenes, Abdullah and Khalil, during their participation at the Texas Centennial Exposition and the New York World's Fair. My visit was a surprise and they were kind enough to store my excess baggage. I shuttled between these two large-veranda'd hotels during breathers from work. I saw Major Stu Benson at Shepherds and Frank Gervasi who had a room on the same floor. The huge rooms had rococo walls and high double doors. One was latticed for both ventilation and privacy, the other solid for safety. The floors and halls were carpeted with oriental rugs. The plushness of the hotel's splendor had faded, like that of a typical New Orleans bordello.

Major Benson had contracted a severe case of "Gypotummy" and was in bed. His two-week attack had finally got the better of him. Instead of going to a military hospital, he fought this weakening disease by himself. Spry for his seventy-two years, he managed to wobble out of bed and cuss his way home, where he regained his health and lectured on the AFS.

War correspondents from all countries have a camaraderie that's almost as close as that of soldiers in the field. I met Quentin Reynolds when I went over to see Gervasi. During a couple of Scotchies, I learned more about what was going on in all theaters of war than I could have by reading their articles in *Collier's*.

The retreat rumors that we had heard en route and on arrival were true. Several days prior to Auchinleck's stand

at Alamein, there had been the smell of burning secret papers in the British and American legations and everybody had made arrangements by truck and train for another exodus from Egypt. Even Pan American Airways had planes ready for top-priority evacuees. While desert refugees poured into the pro-Axis city, Rommel had been knocking on its door and had been expected to enter. However, this panic had subsided and the danger had passed. The people who had had cause to panic again wined, dined, and danced while men were dying less than a three-hour drive away. This was unbelievable at first but understandable on second thought — there was nothing else they could do.

A belly dancer, the star of the Continental Roof floor show, had been uncovered as a member of a spy ring. It was a great scandal at the time, although, on the whole, security was good in Cairo.

I was to contact *Life* and *Time* correspondent Harry Zinder, who was stationed in Tel Aviv, for a possible freelance assignment. As he was in town for Wendell Wilkie's Middle East visit, conveniently for me, he dropped in to see his colleagues.

Punctuating their banter about the war, there were outbursts of their own particular gripe, the censorship at Middle East GHQ. Reynolds, who had flown in from London, and Gervasi, likewise from South Africa, had a carte blanche assignment itinerary which enabled them to travel wherever they deemed the real news would break. Of all places it seemed that here their crisp, factual, objective style of writing was butchered by the censor and the urgency of relaying it home was delayed. Yet with all this, they had respect for the object of their many tirades — "old Steve," Lieutenant Colonel Stephens.

Although briefed directly from headquarters and more comfortably situated at times when not at the front line reporting, they too suffered from a soldier's major malady, the long wait for something to happen, in their case something to fill the press columns for their home readers.

General Montgomery had informed all members of the press of his plans and predictions. He also did this with his men in the field. The battle of El Alamein was a good six weeks off. Upon seeing my completed convoy paintings, the project which we had discussed back in New York

with Bill Chessman, art director, and William Ludlow Chenery, editor of *Collier's* magazine, Gervasi and Reynolds proposed an assignment which would include my services during the long wait ahead. The object was a six weeks' flying tour retracing the steps of Lawrence of Arabia in World War I. I was to record in paint the Arab leaders who worked with Colonel Lawrence or their heirs and act as an interpreter. This would all be integrated with the writings of either one of them.

It was an unusual opportunity and idea and would have been a modern-day *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. But unfortunately for me it was impossible — for I had a year's contract with the Field Service and no accredited correspondent's rating from Washington.

The quota of correspondents in the Middle East was full. A suggestion was made that I go AWOL and come along as a truck driver. The temptation to go was strong but against my better judgment. The idea still remains.

At the Office of War Information, I saw Nick Parrino again and met Elmer Lower, a newspaperman from the Midwest, who was to be instrumental in my joining the OWI as an art director at the end of my Field Service enlistment. Their co-operation in helping me to rush my paintings through censors and to ship them home by diplomatic pouch was gratefully appreciated.

Since I still had free time before joining my outfit which was on its way to the Western Desert, I sketched the American tank-maintenance depot at Heliopolis for the army and OWI. The latter lacked an American art director at the time and was expecting one en route from the States momentarily. I retained two of the paintings and the rest were used for promotional purposes.

John Harmon and I hitched an early-morning ride in our canteen supply truck for parts unknown in the Western Desert. Searching for 15th Company, we drove along the Mena Road to the Pyramids behind a convoy that stretched for miles with dispatch riders darting alongside the humming cars. With American speed we passed it and turned onto the desert highway, the main supply line from Alexandria and Cairo. Both sides of this gray road, as we passed, were filled with to-be-fitted mosaic pieces of war; munition dumps, petrol depots, water stations, supply dumps, airfields and workshops for the visibly dispersed units of tanks,

armored cars, vehicles, and planes. It was hard to believe that we had just left the hustle and bustle of a normal city. The contrast was bewildering.

Late in the afternoon we found the company leaguered off the road at a point known as Kilo 121 which became our camp site for the next three weeks. The area was clean and of soft sand. The cooks had set up their kitchen. Swill pits and latrines had been dug and desert roses (two four-gallon tins planted in a sand hole for a urinal) were marked. Workshop trucks had been set up and camouflaged. As the ambulances were dispersed, I found myself as Hazy's spare driver, living in his ambulance in the suburbs away from the center of camp, a good half-mile walk to mess and a longer walk for subject matter to paint.

At the time of our arrival, 11th AFS Company had been leaguered at Kilo 50 for over a month, bored with inactivity and with no interruption by any major event. Both 11th and 15th Companies were now attached to the forming 10th Corps juggernaut.

Before the battle, huge canvas shelters, constructed to look like trucks, were parked and dispersed at intervals along the supply road to the front. Tanks moved forward at night and spent their days inside them well camouflaged from aerial reconnaissance. Soldiers used them for cover and brew-ups, when they were not occupied by Shermans, Crusaders, or Churchills. I avoided painting this device to fool the enemy in case I was ever caught in a bag (captured) with my paintings.

One of Montgomery's major devices in building up power and surprise was the deception of disguising tanks as three-ton trucks and three-ton trucks as tanks. Many a bomb hit a hide-and-seek target which wasn't there. This deception was so accurate that we ourselves, in the midst of it, were bamboozled. Caught behind a slow-moving truck, returning from an evacuation, we would discover, upon overtaking it, the petticoat clattering treads of a tank showing beneath its deceptive dress.

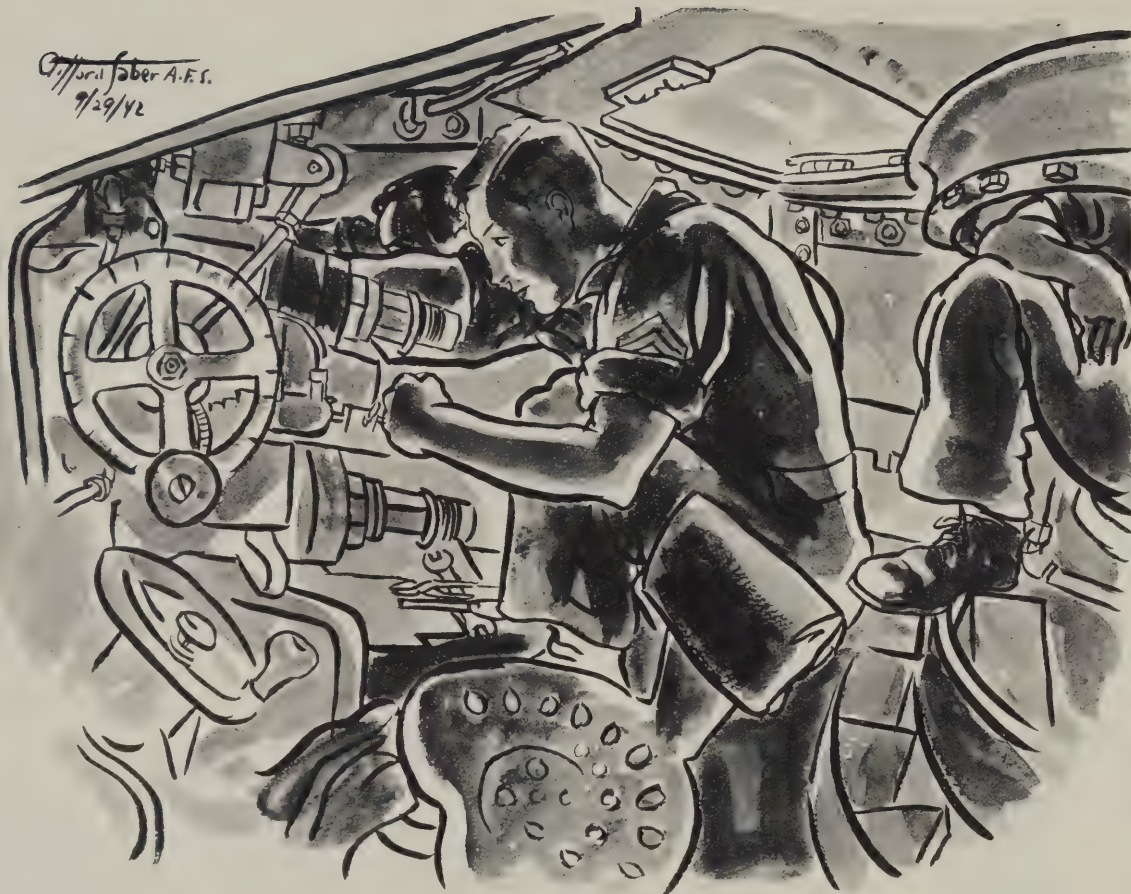
The vertebrae of the 8th Army in its rejuvenation were the desert war guns. From the offensive antitank gun to the heavy artillery, which included the new 105-millimeter self-propelled gun, to the defensive Ack-Ack and Before, they moved forward daily and dominated the area. They were dug in, harbored in tents, and hid under camouflage



MAJOR STUART BENSON

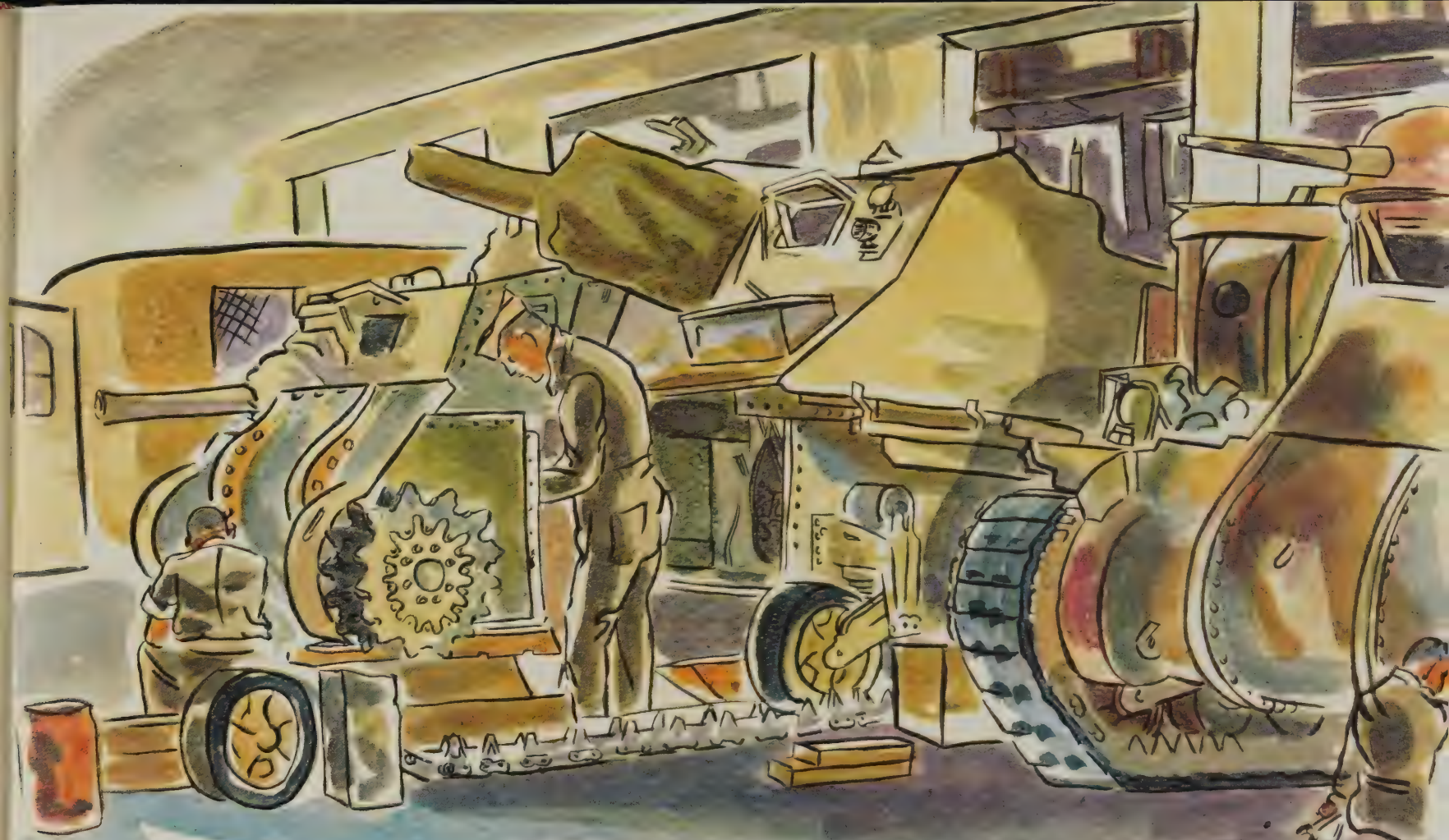
Off. J. L. Fisher A.F.S.
9/29/42

This Maintenance School has trained many of the British officers and Empire Troops of the 8th Army. They are instructed in the fundamentals of the Grant and Sherman tanks by American technicians. In this particular picture several tanks are being given an overhauling and one Grant has recently come back from the combat zone for repairs. It is also here that many German tanks are disassembled to see how they tick.



U.S. ARMORS WORKING ON GENERAL GRANT

A Power Group In Fitter's Course At The United States Maintenance School,
Heliopolis Repair Depot, Cairo 9/29/42



Clifford J. Faber A.F.S.
9/29/42

Power Train Group in Fitter's Course
of U.S. Maintenance School.
Helipolis Repair Depot.



KILO 121 — AMBULANCE

netting. The formidable guns were eventually the decisive killers and became more important than tanks, for they could ward off an armored thrust and fire over a mine field.

Daily enemy aerial and photo reconnaissance showed moving trucks or static car parks and nothing more. Rommel never knew how many tanks opposed him until the unmasking night of this camouflage battle mardi gras.

Life with an army in the desert was a cycle of advancing or flapping (retreating) or nomadic wandering. With the

exception of the excitement of war, it was a Bedouin-like existence, a contented severance from the outside world; what you didn't see, you didn't crave. It was as sterile as the sexless desert. It either bored you to death, drove you nuts, or made a philosopher out of you.

I was completely happy in the desert. I came to know that even more certainly when I left it on sick leave; like many another man, I was glad to return to it and to the comradeship and affection that existed there. Out on the

desert, men were brought closer together by the consciousness of the shared dangers and by the human longing to express themselves and be understood. A soldier's lot on leave in town was a lonely one. He wanted someone to help him forget the war he had just left, preferably someone female to wine and dine after the constant association with men. But white girls were hard to find in Cairo and Alexandria, and the native women were taboo. And although the soldier was loaded, his pockets bulging with Egyptian pounds, he was a sad sack compared to the base wallah who didn't have a piaster in his pocket but was as good as a millionaire for he had a girl on his arm. I had personal experience of this many times, especially when Slim Aarons and Burgess Scott, a photographer-correspondent team for *Yank*, flaunted the most devastating blondes in front of us.

The time and order of movement, a point indicated on a map, were delivered by a dispatch rider or received by wireless. The move was made to the order point. Camp was set up. Slit trenches and latrines were dug. In smaller or single units, the latrine was a newspaper, a shovel, and the wild blue yonder. Invariably, as soon as the workshops were unloaded and the cooks set up, a whistle blew, new orders had come in and the unit was off on the move again — but not before slit trenches, swill pits, and latrines were filled so that the spot was left as it had been found for the protection of vehicles that would pass that way in the night. Drivers complained for usually the move was only a few miles one way or the other. Breaking camp was leaving the known for the unknown with the possibility of excitement waiting ahead over the next hill. It was a complete act of area abandonment. All that remained were a few petrol tins, which were scrounged by the Arabs or were left to rust. The Western Desert was littered with such rusted mementos.

Whereas the Bedouins could roam at will and closely camp their caravans, it was not so with the 8th Army. All vehicles and personnel were dispersed two hundred yards away from each other when leaguered night or day, a precaution against attack. And close by was the mother, wife, and best friend of the Desert Rat, the slit trench, a prone-position, shallow grave allowing a man to be sufficiently below the surface of the ground to escape the straf-

ing and the fragmentation bombs of the Luftwaffe. Its only vulnerability was a direct hit.

When repetitious stories about women, home, and would-be generals were exhausted, there was one subject that could start a good argument — slit trenches. To dig or not to dig was only part of the desert bedroom question.

There was the fatalist, usually the lazy type, who said "The hell with it!" and quietly slept in his vehicle with no qualms about bombs, shells, or bullets. There is no discussion here.

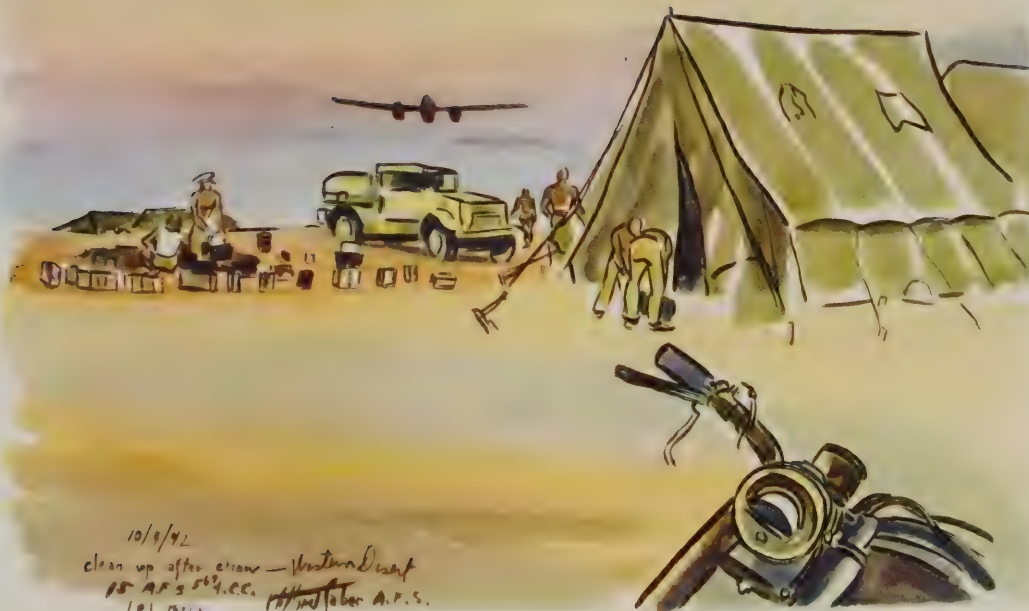
However, there was never any agreement among the dyed-in-the-wool slit-trench diggers. Some liked them long; some liked them square; some liked them shallow; some liked them deep; some liked them straight; some liked them V-shaped — and all parties felt very strongly about their preferences and had sound reasons to back up their particular theories. The deep-trench digger, for instance, maintained the deeper they go the greater their protection from bomb or shell blast. The shallow-trench men agreed but pointed out the fact that a close hit would bury them alive in a deep trench, thus saving their buddies a lot of trouble. The long-trench spader insisted his maintained protection, but the square-trench shovelers said, yes, but from only two directions. The V-shape excavators stressed the point that if a plane strafed when they were in a vulnerable position, they could scurry around the corner of their trench to safety. Once the type was decided upon, it was dug with pick, shovel, and tears — tears when immediately upon completion one was told to move. Sometimes slit trenches were left uncovered for known units to follow, but convoy commanders would invariably drive right by hundreds of perfectly dug trenches of all sizes and shapes to pull up in the middle of a rocky terrain.

My daily life in the desert started at daybreak or as soon as the sun emerged, bringing with it the flies. I had to wash and shave in a canteen cupful of water. Sometimes I had a sponge bath without the use of my water ration. A sponge kept out overnight gathered sufficient moisture for a comfortable watery rubdown.

With the toilet over, I occasionally sketched before breakfast, which consisted of American bacon, marmalade, margarine, thick army biscuits, and the inevitable tea, the



AFS — SUPPLY TRUCK



CLEAN-UP AFTER CHOW

basic drink of the 8th Army. It was a strong yellow even if milk was added to it. Always full of the taste of petrol, oversweet, insipid, but with no flavor of tea, it was the old stand-by — "When in doubt, brew up!"

We ate around and about the open kitchen of the cooks. Someone said that in England the food came from God and the cooks from the devil. The British army claimed that their cooks were taught a course in cookery by the

famous chefs of English hotels but that the men just went back to their own method of cooking. One hasn't tasted bacon until he has been served by a Tommy in the field. They let the bacon look at the hot pan and then serve it. They claimed it gave you more energy and fattened you up. Although the 8th Army food was badly cooked, it was adequate, and the rations were nutritious and varied. Bully beef and hardtack biscuits were usually the order of the

day and varied only in cooking presentation. To overcome this monotonous diet, an occasional tin of M & V (meat and vegetables) was substituted. To compare Crimean War vintage ration to American chow was like comparing an unseasoned hamburger to a charcoal-broiled steak. The wholesome outdoor eating was fine until you had a wind blow, then the sand became your meal.

The only complaint to this war picnicking was that the available seating room near the cooks accommodated about one fifth of the company. Consequently balancing two mess tins, one on top of the other, a cup of tea mounted precariously on the handle of one, a slice of bread on the other, you bolted your food between flea bites and flies. As you ate, the flies ate, and you ate the flies that ate what you ate. You were constantly on the eating-fly alert for squadrons of these trachoma-carrying insects which dive-bombed like Stukas at you and yours. Fighting these pests was a war in itself, many a man fanned his way through the desert chase. They were always with you. The natives seemed to be acclimated to them and walked about blinded by them. Their eyes oozed with clusters of them. Truly it was one of the seven plagues of Egypt.

During the day when I wasn't on evacuation duty with a lone ambulance or with the section or when there was action attached to one of the units engaged, I painted catch-as-catch-can. Returning to our camp site before sunset, the gang got together for a Nescafé brew-up or dinner. Cigarettes around a fire, a drink from the section-shared bottle of whiskey, some idle talk and the day was over. You slept out in the open underneath the stars or in the ambulance for more comfort.

At three-thirty our second day at Kilo 121, we were enveloped in a khamseen — our first sand-baptism wave of weather. When the khamseen blows, says the Arab, even murder is permissible. When this scorching wind blew from the south, it covered the sky, hid the sun and stopped a battle. Khamseen is the numeral "fifty" in Arabic and fifty days of this wind is expected during the year. If the khamseen blows three days in succession, a man has the right to kill his wife, five days — his best friend, seven days — himself.

The first uncharterable signs were the deadly silence of its approach; then the sun became hidden by an orange-

red veil which deepened in intensity. In the south, the azure horizon fast turned into a dirty indigo. In a few minutes the horizons had condensed to a roaring nothing and a red choking wave of sand pounded over us. The fine dust seeped into everything, your food, your eyes, nose, and ears and between your teeth. Ghostly front-bound convoys passed by, their noise stilled by the sand-blasting wind. The khamseen lasted through the night and died out with the next morning's sun and the return of the sticky tickling feet of flies. Reminders of it stayed with us for days.

A New Zealand CCS moved alongside of us. Orders came through for us to evacuate their patients to Helwan, a suburb of Cairo. It was a long round trip of over two hundred miles. The men brought into our area were not battle casualties but those subject to desert ailments, jaundice, sandfly fever, desert sores, malaria and occasionally a few bomb-happy cases, some of whom had been peppered by jumping-jack mines.

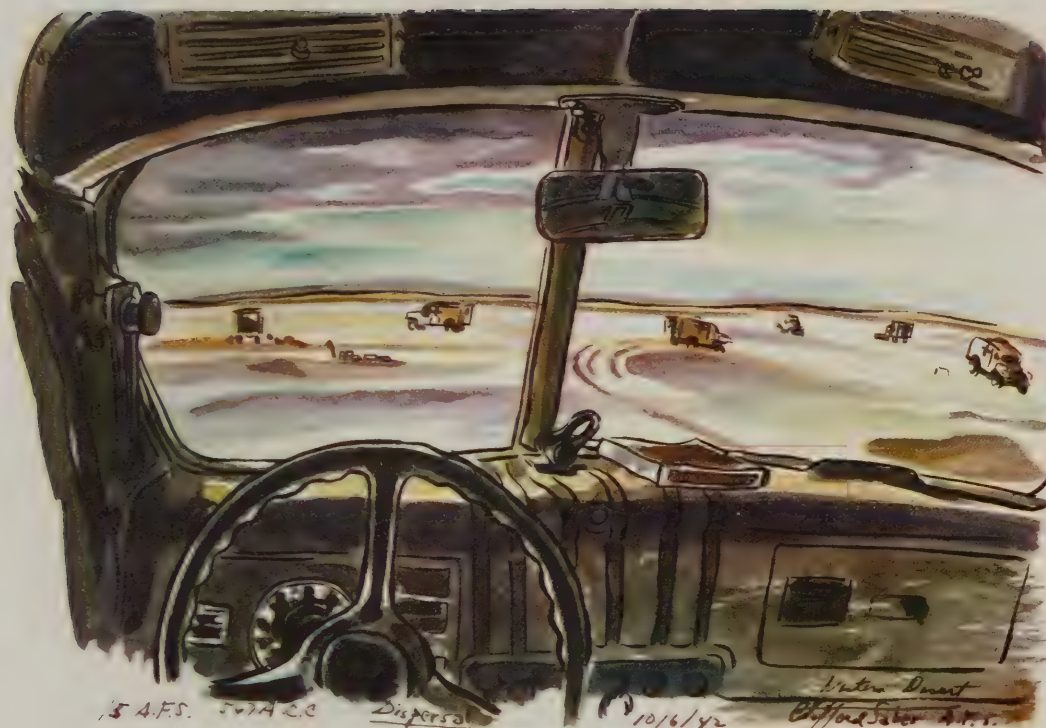
Land mines and booby traps were cleverly secreted in every strategic spot on the front, from mine fields to shoulders of roads or tracks, to enticing scroungeable objects and diabolical ones deposited on or attached to the wounded or dead. There were antitank mines which looked like large deep bowls, telamines buried in cases, plunger mines, square mines, soup-plate mines attached to mines. There were magnetic mines which clung to metal until they exploded. And so dreaded by the infantry, the "jumping-jack" or "S" mine, which was filled with ball bearings and metal scrap, and when subjected to five pounds of pressure or more, leapt from the ground to breast height and burst like a shotgun. A man had five seconds to hit the ground beneath its leaded spray.

There was still a lull and a long wait for we were not working at full capacity. Every day more units and supplies moved up past our camp. Two freckle-faced Highlanders of the Black Watch pulled their Bren carrier off the road for a minor repair. A few friendly words were exchanged during a brew-up, and I did a fast sketch of them before they moved on. For everyone, the battle to come was uppermost in thought and conversation.

As far as security allowed, all men were told of preparations and battle plans. Company commanders were briefed with the over-all happenings of the corps and army. For



EARLY MORNING TEA WITH THE "BLACK WATCH"



DISPERSAL

the first time, all medical units were in constant touch with corps headquarters by wireless. Evacuation and medical supply routes were worked out to reduce time for the benefit of the wounded. Map locations of every medical unit in the field were given and each MO of a unit knew the whereabouts of all other units. Blood plasma banks were set at key positions. Self-sustaining operating teams carrying a nine-day supply of food and water were held

in reserve and rushed to units that required their operating team aid without being a burden on their supplies.

The British medical evacuation system was determined by the particular difficulties of the terrain, the various types of fighting going on, and was mobile, subject to constant change. The guiding principle was to send the wounded as far back as possible and to keep the advance stations clear.

The operational setup was based on four mobile posi-

tioned units, a stationary base hospital, and an ambulance relay team from the front line back to base: the RAP (regimental aid post), the ADS (advanced dressing station), the MDS (main dressing station), the CCS (casualty clearing station), BH (base hospital), and the relay teamwork of the LFA (light field ambulance) and MAC (motor ambulance convoy).

The RAP, a canvased truck with one assigned ambulance, was attached close to the heels of a regimental battalion, and followed it through thick and thin. Its personnel was one commanding medical officer, a small group of stretcher bearers, and orderlies. It went the farthest forward in the front line that the Red Cross could go, with the exception of the arm-banded infantry stretcher bearers. It usually screened itself from machine-gun fire by nestling in the ridges of the terrain. This was its only protection, for it was subject to air attack and artillery fire. Casualties were brought into the RAP by tanks, trucks, or any sort of conveyance, or carried in by its own stretcher bearers. After first-aid treatment, they were transported back by its ambulance to the ADS.

The ADS, usually one to six miles behind the front in a slightly less dangerous position, was situated in the vicinity of artillery and was susceptible to the inevitable Stuka parade. Serving all the fanned-out battalion RAP's in the Brigade, it had a larger staff which re-dressed wounds and performed minor operations and, if necessary, amputations. It had its own six assigned ambulances which relayed the patients back to the MDS where the surgical wonders were performed.

The MDS, about twelve miles still further back, was larger and better equipped than the several ADS's it served. It had at its disposal an operating team of three doctors, a mobile operating theater, a group of small tents containing equipment and motor-powered electricity. Its assigned ambulances shuttled patients within its confines and then down the line to the CCS where the most severe cases were treated.

The CCS was a mobile tent hospital approximately forty miles from the front. It had its own mobile power unit which fed electricity to the various cleverly blacked-out tents, seven or eight wards, an operating theater, a reception center, an X-ray lab, three mess rooms, a labora-

tory, and a sick bay. It was well adapted hygienically for medical service as a base hospital but it never held patients more than a few days. Like a circus the whole thing could be knocked down in several hours and could move its staff equipment in twenty-four hours. It was usually situated in a fairly large town, a seaport, or a railroad center. From here a casualty could be put on a plane, a hospital ship, train, or be sent by ambulance to a base hospital.

The LFA was a light field ambulance medical unit composed of an MDS and two ADS's. All its ambulances served these forward stations, including the RAP's. There were three light field ambulance units in a division.

The MAC ambulance operated primarily from CCS's to a base hospital, also between MDS's and CCS's.

At times the chase of the Fox was so swift that ambulances were in front of stretcher bearers or an MDS was temporarily fifty miles distant from an ADS and right next door to a CCS. To be a patient in this regular medical channel was to lose contact with the outside world for months. They made sure you got well.

The following evacuation story happened to Lee Ault and Bill Van Cleef who were in my contingent coming overseas and who joined the Marines after their AFS hitch.

During a tedious evacuation run with a wounded sergeant of the famous Highland Division, Ault and Van Cleef engaged their patient in conversation. His wounds were in his legs — where he had been wounded before at Alamein. Advancing with his company under cover of a barrage, the sergeant related, he was crawling to the crest of a hill when he saw a Jerry gun crew still there and fiercely firing an 88 mm.

"They looked scared when they saw me, and after I used my Tommy gun on them they were squealing like pigs," the Scotty was saying.

"Did you kill them all?" asked Ault, incredulous.

"Mon, I hope so!" was the answer. "It was me or them."

"I suppose you'll get a decoration for this," interposed Van Cleef.

"No," was the prompt response, "but the bloke who came out and carried me back will."

The whole desert was alive with dust and movement. More tanks, guns, and lorries swept past and we were still leaguered. One could never tell from the face of the Tommy



NO. 1 NEW ZEALAND CCS

whether he was advancing or retreating. His army had been beaten back six hundred miles from Benghazi, but his object was to get there again. Little did he realize the unbelievable battle for conquest that lay ahead. He had recovered from the mental and physical shock of retreat and now there was a camaraderie between officers and

men unsurpassed in their determination to win except by their commander-in-chief in the field.

The only thing that puzzled me was the continuing caste system of the military, batman serving officers even in the face of death. In the midst of all this build-up fever, the British brass managed to capture a semblance of home

*Antich
Staff Sergeant Reginald Jensen
3rd Light Field Ambulance
Western Desert - M.E.F.*

*Chiffon Faber
10/25/92*



STAFF SERGEANT REGINALD "BARON" JENSEN

with unconscious pictorial humor — tea served in style — wicker chairs and tables. There were many things I wanted to paint but never had the opportunity. This was one of them, "The old art of war."

With the exception of parade and inspection, we had nothing like this in the American army, of course. In the field and off duty American officers didn't work at their ranks at all.

Living uncertainly amid khamseens, dust and the ever-present worry of "Are they ours?" when planes came over, one couldn't help admiring the Tommies' unflinching courage in the face of death, their simple dignity and decency and the comradeship that united them, and their adaptability to us and other new troops. Their spirit was not only high — it was contagious!

Typical were Quartermaster Sergeant Lionel White and Staff Sergeant Reginald Jenson of the 3rd Light Field Ambulance Unit while we were attached to their outfit. To us, they were Whitey and Baron and they became part of the coffee-drinking Kids, participating in our poker-game cutups and being initiated into baseball. To pinpoint their personalities would be to say Whitey resembled Clark Gable and Baron, James Cagney. I painted both of them.

Another chum was Tony Reese from Birmingham, England, where he and his mother ran a hotel. Somewhere around Mersa Matruh, after the breakthrough, Tony, as he put it, had the honor of the undivided attention of three strafing Messerschmidts which had mistaken his armored car with an open top for a general's command car.

The Me 109's killed the other men who had fired back with feeble bursts from the Vickers, and Tony was shot through the nose, the bullet coming out the side of his head. Blinded by his wound, and not knowing his buddies were dead, he himself was left for dead by the on-rushing advancing troops. He was found by the medical units four days later.

He spent the next nine months in army base hospitals, where I met him as a fellow patient and where we both vied for the attentions of the same Scottish nurse, a trait common to the beleaguered convalescents. We were jilted for a surgeon, a major by rank. We compensated for this

by driving the hospital personnel crazy. In our hospital suits of bright robin's-egg blue with white bandages for turbans and red identification ties, we impersonated the war reporting of the BBC; he acting the parts of various announcers and I being the sound-effects man. For a man who had been so close to death, his outlook on life and his sense of humor were great morale boosters for the rest of the patients. As a matter of fact, despite the complaining about flies, the dust, the food, and the lack of mail from home through the long unbroken months of desert life without leave, their morale was good.

With the exception of tank technicians and the 9th Air Force ground crews who worked as separate units, we were among the few Americans closely associated with the Tommies in the field, and got their ribbing of our army system first-hand. Their remarks were not directed at us, but their pet beefs about the Yanks were the publicity, the medal and ribbon system, the rate of pay and standard of food, and the concern about their girls at home where American troops were stationed.

In the Middle East, the opportunity was there but no real attempt was ever made by the Anglo-American brass to get these two English-speaking Allies together for understanding and comradeship, although a club for such purposes was suggested by Allied correspondents. The only personal contact between British and American soldiers was purely accidental; they might run across one another in city bars and these meetings were not always congenial. Someone would always have one drink too many; and instead of the shot of liquor sparking amiability, it would do just the opposite.

We of the Field Service, being almost a part of the British family, tried to explain and clean up antagonisms. Besides ourselves, English and American correspondents tried in lectures to the troops to bring about greater unity.

The NAFFI canteen or the individual unit canteen or campfire were the gathering centers in the field. The further we advanced, the more the soldiers complained because it meant they outdistanced their canteen and cigarette supply.

Inside a canteen tent, a hooded light threw a dim glow over a scramble of pushing men dusty from head to foot. The place was crowded and the air was stale and heavy



QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT LIONEL "WHITEY" WHITE



Staff sergeant Wayne McMeekan, clerk Pat Fairo, chief Carl Adam, Captain Andrew Heer

15TH AFS FIELD HEADQUARTERS

with smoke. Static distorted a broadcast of music from home, coming from a radio you couldn't see. You squeezed in and edged your way toward your own group which was

chatting noisily. If you were lucky, you grabbed yourself an upended box or petrol tin for a seat; otherwise you stood, drank beer, and watched a dart game. The canteen

meant relaxation, news from home, and luxury, for you could purchase unusual supplies of canned food, liquor, and the most precious of all — cigarettes of every breed, shape, and description. With a few beers under my belt, I painted such a scene by chance. The light was so dim I couldn't see my paints. Someone produced a flashlight and held it over my shoulder long enough for its limited light to allow me to complete the fast sketch.

The art of making a fire in the desert was to take an empty petrol tin and cut it in two with a can opener. The bottom half you filled with sand, on which was poured petrol. A lighted match thrown into it did the trick, and the blaze lasted long enough to enable you to boil water or to cook. The other half of the empty tin was put over the fire; and while it was still hot, water was poured in. This scalding was supposed to take out the taste of petrol, allowing it to be used as a cooking pot — provided you washed it out before adding fresh water.

No open fires were allowed after dark. A light in the desert was as dangerous as one at sea for it could be seen for miles and was a dead giveaway for enemy patrols and night-fighter aircraft.

Any fires made after sundown were fashioned in blacked-out vehicles and tents with primus stoves. These were single petrol or kerosene burners imported from Sweden and used by Mediterranean natives who could cook a nine-course dinner on them as efficiently as a housewife with a modern range. Today, if I were to drive through a desert, my basic equipment would be a primus and two can openers, one for puncturing and ripping a can in half and the other to cut a clean edge on a can.

Although we became acclimated to the mass-made British tea, we did also have the American Nescafé, an instant coffee. Whenever we had a supply, the Kids chipped in for it at two dollars a small jar. At coffee time, which was usually in the late afternoon, each cup was prepared individually with evaporated milk and sugar. Buck Kahlo, our NCO at Alamein, usually did the fire-building honors. Buck had been with the Australians of the 9th Division during the bombing of Tobruk. Prior to the war, he had been a film cutter for Twentieth Century Fox Studios in Hollywood and today he is back at his old job. Our coffee brew-up bull sessions became a daily routine and we were joined by



"BUCK" KAHLO BREWING COFFEE

British Workshop And Stores Trucks Attached To The 15th AFS 567 ACC
(Ambulance Car Company Western Desert) 10/11/42

Our company, the 15th AFS has British maintenance crews to repair or fit our Dodge ambulance for desert warfare. At the time of this painting, all ambulances were given a thorough inspection and equipped with extra petrol and water tins, necessary tools and food rations for the forthcoming push. In the painting is an AFS ambulance up for repairs and inspection. The truck at left center is the machine shop, which consists of welding equipment, lathes, etc. The truck at the right holds stores for the company, consisting of everything from paint to nuts and bolts. A tarpaulin is slung over the two trucks, then camouflage netting, enabling the men to work outdoors in the hot sun. In the left foreground is a sterilizing cabinet which the welders finished repairing. In the right foreground are boxes of supplies.



British Workshop + Stores Tents
attached to 15 A.F.S. 567 A.C.C.
Western Desert Clifford Jaber A.F.S.
9/11/42

RASC and AFS Canteen
Western Desert 10/13/42

To the 15th Company of the American Field Service are attached a large number of British personnel. These comprise our mess staff and extensive workshops. Although we have separate messes, we know them all as well as we know the rest of the company. Whenever there are lulls in our activities, we indulge in violent softball games with them. We share the same canteen, which boasts of a radio and a dart board. Whenever one returns to HQ the first question concerns the state of the canteen. In this particular watercolor, done by the light of a flashlight and drawn before Alamein, we were camped within five hours' drive of Cairo and the canteen flourished as it never has since. Besides good Canadian and Australian beer, Scotch whiskey was plentiful as well as all manner of canned goods. Here some of our Tommies are indulging in England's favorite pastime, "Darts over a Pint or Two," in our canteen which once housed a squadron of Italian pilots in Libya.



R.A.S.C. &
Western Desert

A.F.S. Contingent
Clifford Sabers

10/13/92

11th AFS vs 15th AFS
Baseball — Western Desert
10/14/42

One of the joys of the American volunteers attached to various units of the 8th Army is to demonstrate the national American sport, baseball. (To reciprocate, we have all taken lessons in the art of British rugby.) During the lull before the Alamein battle, after all chores were done, a game of scrub would be taken up among the men. The Tommies caught on to the game quite rapidly and within a short time managed to get up a team of their own and challenge the American group. In this painting, the two rival American volunteer companies attached to separate British units got together and had a match.



11 A.F.S. VS 15 A.F.S.
Baseball
Western Desert
10/13/42
H. Ford Faber

British Signal Detachment — 3rd Light Field Ambulance
Lance Corporal Clifton — Western Desert 10/20/42

Before every attack, General Montgomery informs all units fully of what they are expected to do by these signal detachment mobile wireless trucks.

We always receive a "griff talk" from the unit officers in which the general plan of battle is outlined on illustrated maps. We are informed about what each division is going to do and is doing.

Since we often have to roam "about the blue" quite a bit on our own, we are always provided with large-scale maps of our active areas and British signal detachment for communications.

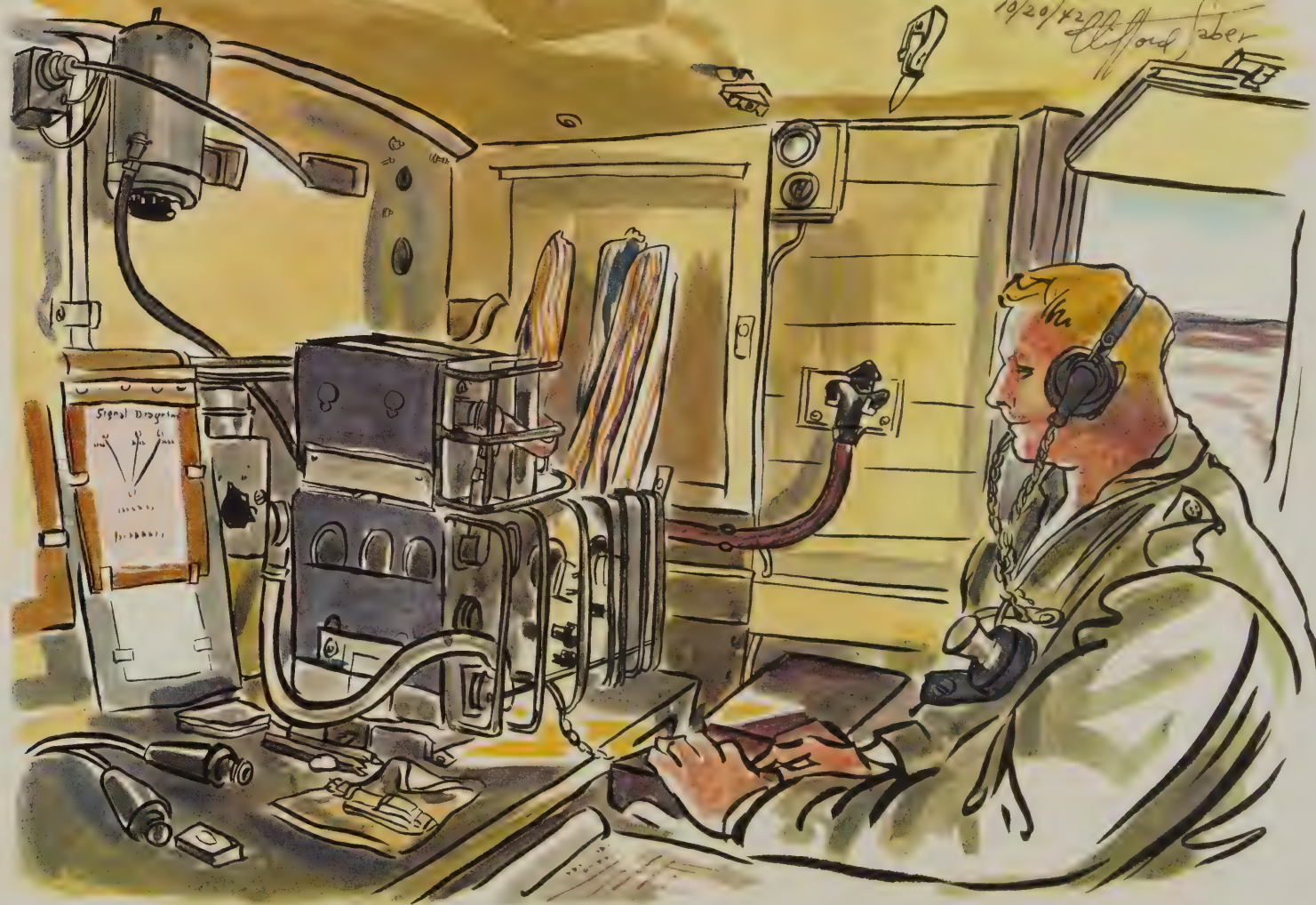
Here at the telephone and telegraph of the 3rd Light Field Ambulance Signal Detachment is Lance Corporal Clifton. In the corner of the truck are flags which were used to signal dispersed vehicles and officers of the unit of incoming messages.

Various colored flags represent communications signals of danger, stand by, retreat, attack, and all's well. If you can see the signal detachment truck with its flag flying, you know just how you stand where you are bequered. This British lightweight wireless truck is commonly known as a "gin palace."

Lance Corporal Clifton

British Signal Detachment - 3rd Field
Western Desert. Ambulance

10/20/42
Clifton



3rd Light Field Ambulance
Mess Dispersal 10/21/42
Western Desert - 25 miles behind the lines

The first thing one hears on arrival in the Western Desert is "Dispersal," and he hears it morning, noon, and night. (Hazy Hinman of Dartmouth, with whom I share an ambulance, often disperses so far from the rest of the company that we have actually got lost trying to find them, even in the daytime.) Obviously most important is dispersal of vehicles, both when traveling in convoy and parked, for any concentration of trucks is sure to attract the Luftwaffe or fire from Jerry 88's. So conscious of dispersal are many units that on occasion the men are forced to eat their meals completely dispersed, as in the painting The RP's (regimental police) are afraid of the possibility of a stray raiding plane. This may seem to be overdoing a good thing but as it turned out we saw the need for such dispersal months after this picture was done, when our rapid advance near Sirta outstripped the progress of the air force, thus giving Jerry plenty of opportunities for strafing and bombing concentrations.

Red Light Field Ambulance Men's Hospital
Somewhere in the Western Desert
25 mile, behind line

Edwin Faber
10/21/42



Andy Geer, Wayne McMeekan, Whitey, and Baron. Occasionally the griff (gossip) and sipping were interrupted for a taste of slit trenches.

In no-man's land there was sporadic fighting by both sides in an attempt to find vulnerable spots, but on the whole the desert was comparatively quiet, except for the excitement and interest in the air. RAF fighter squadrons

with the support of American fighter groups engaged the enemy overhead, and all along the line indulged in spectacular dogfights. Heavy bombers of the RAF and USAAF flew over with ever-increasing activity. In formations of eighteen, they inaugurated the theory and practice of strategic bombing.

Very few people realize the part played by some 15,000

troops with the American Middle East Air Force, the heavy bombers of the 98th and 376th Groups, the medium bombers of the 12th Group, and the fighters of the 57th Group attached to the RAF. They were invaluable and regarded with the highest esteem by the British field commanders. Generals Alexander and Montgomery were the first ground force generals to recognize the decisive role which air power could play in the war. When Montgomery reorganized the 8th Army, he moved his air headquarters into his own and he lived in daily contact with his resourceful air commanders, the British Generals Tedder and Cunningham and the American Generals Bereton and Strickland. It was the strongest combined team as yet thrown into the war by the Allied Chiefs of Staff.

11th Company challenged the "Chickens" to a series of baseball games. The competition included British personnel of both companies. With Whitey, Baron, and a couple of cooks, we won six games out of ten. We won four straight games, coming from behind in the last two. In the last game, in the last inning we scored four runs to win. While we were at bat, I did a quick color sketch of the game and then went out to left field to catch fly balls.

En route to the field of tournament, we were directed by military police. There were some two thousand of them all over this concentrated area during the build-up and battle. The traffic on the dusty road was still heavy. Between transports, as they lumbered by, you spotted warning signs, boldly lettered, "Hey, do you know where you are?" Signs leading up to the front progressed in wit and comment. "Stop, another five hundred feet and a Jerry will give you this command." At the breakthrough line one read, "If going much farther, please take one," and an arrow pointed to a white cross.

A flip of a coin between Lieutenants Evan Thomas and Art Howe decided which of their platoons was to take over the first major assignment. Thomas won the toss and took his ambulances and men to the New Zealand Division in the northern sector of the line, leaving us to sweat out the long evacuations to the rear.

Their battle experience started with the raging eleven-day battle at Alamein and the plunge through the hole in the line after the armor defeated the panzers at Tel el Aqqaqir (Hill of the Wicked Men). They wintered with



10/27/42
Cooking Out

COOKING OUT IN THE BLUE

and evacuated the Kiwis on their repeated encircling moves westward in the chase.

The New Zealand Division, brought down from Syria, where it had been resting, was thrown into quickly prepared positions at the narrow front of Alamein Junction. In July, they held Rommel at a standstill for 110 days while the 8th Army was reformed and strengthened.

Of all the United Kingdom soldiers, the Aussies came closest to the Americans in manners and temperament; they were somewhat reminiscent of our gun-slinging frontiersmen. They had utter contempt for the dangers of war. With their native tribesmen, the fun-loving and strong-hearted Maoris who remembered the heroism of their South Seas ancestors, they charged into battle undaunted with bayonets and the blood-curdling yell of the Haka, the ancient Polynesian war chant.

Our final assignments to stations at various desert tracks (military roads) at the front came through. Art Howe was ordered to take our twenty ambulances to the 10th Armoured Division and the rest stayed with company headquarters to service the 8th South African Casualty Clearing Station.

The day before the battle and before we moved to a designated point leading north to El Alamein Station, Wee Wee and I took the last run to a civilized community — Helwan, where we made good use of an overnight stay at the hospital.

With everything moving up, our road was fairly clear of traffic and we were fortunate that our eight sitting cases were desert maladies. We made it in four hours, better time than the average run with severely wounded. Several of our patients had been in the army since the beginning of the war and their wives, children and homes in England had been bombed. They were the ones you expected to feel violent about the war, in a justifiable spirit of revenge which might prompt them to all sorts of brutalities. But amazingly to the contrary, they were the ones with perspective — they treated the prisoners decently, praised a German pilot's bravery, and discussed at length the problems of postwar. And they had no illusions as to their prospects of a job, a home, or real peace when they returned to civilian life.

To relieve the monotony of the long grinding trip, I

played the harmonica while Wee Wee strummed his guitar which he had recently learned to chord. As a team we entertained the wounded, keeping their minds off their pain and the jouncing of the vehicle. It invariably wound up with a song fest of "Roll Out the Barrel." Our endeavors were well appreciated but I doubt if we would ever have been tolerated in more normal surroundings.

As it was inadvisable to return to Kilo 121 after dark, we took a train for Cairo, an hour's ride away, for a last night out. We left the ambulance in the hospital car park, and decided to make our return jaunt to Kilo 121 at the crack of dawn.

When the train halted in Helwan station, the fellaheen clamored onto the cars. Men, women, and children, endeavoring to get in, pushed and jumped over each other, violently worming their way through doors and windows. A subway rush was kitten's play compared to this.

Already seated across from us in the compartment was a pencil-wax-mustached Effendi, an upper-class Cairene wearing the traditional firmly blocked short tarboosh (fez). In the Middle East you could always tell from his tarboosh what Arab country a man came from: in Syria and Lebanon it was tall and firmly blocked; west of Egypt it was unblocked, worn on the back of the head.

A young Egyptian police sergeant in khaki and fez joined us. Although both Egyptians spoke good English, Wee Wee, my former pupil, and I enjoyed their reactions when we first spoke in their native tongue. After the war Wee Wee continued his studies at Harvard, majoring in Arabic. Later he used it for two years on an anthropological expedition to French Morocco and as professor at the American University in Beirut.

We spoke, of course, with an American point of view and the Effendi with an oriental; the twain never met but there was the possibility of a meeting of minds and the company was congenial.

We got into the city rather late, 9 P.M. The police sergeant insisted on treating us to our first glass of mango juice, which was tasty and enjoyable. He amazed us with his knowledge of languages. Only twenty-three years old, he spoke seventeen tongues. And more amazing was the fact that he had never gone to school but learned them all from reading dictionaries — undoubtedly he had a photo-

graphic mind. We wanted to tarry longer with him but the thought of a bath at the Continental Hotel and some entertainment was more urgent. He procured a gharri (horse and buggy) for us as no taxis seemed to roam near the station.

Abdullah greeted us with outstretched palm; he had a room for us. In no time we were spruced up and up on the roof watching the swaying movements of a heavily bejeweled dark-eyed dancer in the floor show and the animated twirling of couples dancing. We wanted company and it was all around us but we were hesitant and felt alone. We waited, hoping someone would come along, but no one did, for girls were few and men plentiful.

At 2 A.M., we had toasted cheese and chicken sandwiches sent up to our room, where we ate them while one of us took an air bath and the other soaked in a deep tub of water. The bathtubs in Egypt were wonderful; they were so deep you could swim or drown in them. Sadly, at 6 A.M., we left this brief moment of civilian bliss and were back with our outfit at 2 P.M.

With the last aroma of Cairo left behind, we were dispersed by the MP's after receiving our bully-beef stew from the cooks. While mess tins were cleaned in already cooled-off soapy water, the sun sank below the horizon, washing the sands with soft pastel hues as it descended. The desert night was cool and chilly.

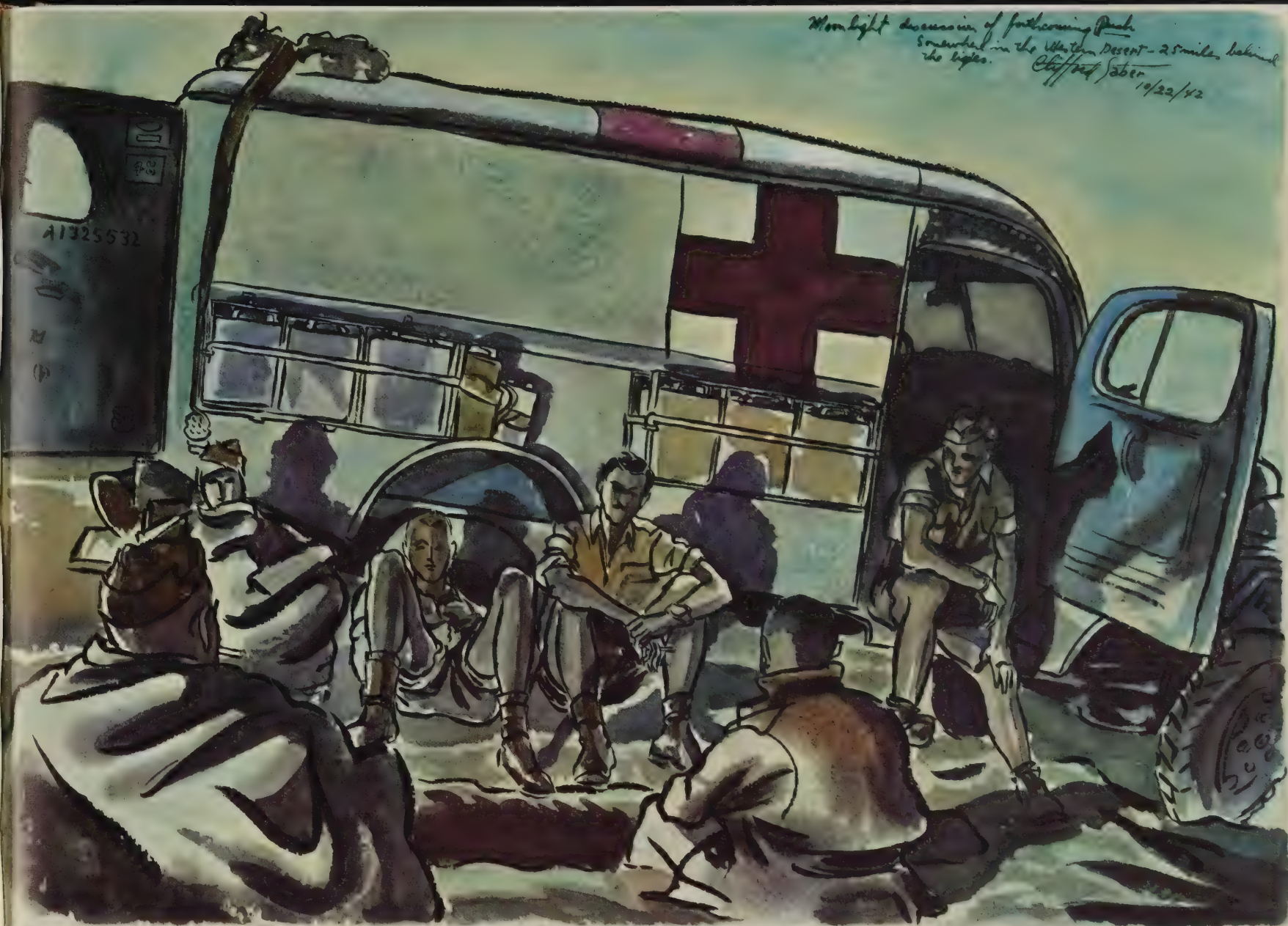
Like Bedouins, some draped blankets over their summer khaki and we sat around a slit trench on its mounds and leaned back against the ambulance which protected us from the wind. An almost full moon came up with a brightness clear enough to read by. Everyone cupped their cigarettes, shielding the glowing tip from any enemy patrol or plane. Montgomery's last words, "Good hunting," were passed along the line for tomorrow's "do," and it became a departing trade-mark. According to the stories circulated, some of our men had already been captured and we wondered if we would be caught in the bag. Talk of Benghazi four hundred miles away was the main topic. Twice the 8th Army had gone there and twice it had been hurled back. The first time was in 1940 and the second at the end of 1941. The Benghazi Arabs almost came to expect them yearly, and their children chanted, "*Mungaria, quoice quittir*, El Englesi come but once a year."

Moonlight Discussion Of Forthcoming Alamein Push

10/22/42

This scene of several Tommies and American Field Service men sitting around a slit trench in front of an American ambulance in the bright moonlight discussing the forth coming push will be familiar to every man who has been in the desert. The atmosphere grew more tense, gradually building into terrific suspense which the gigantic barrage of October 23-24 finally broke. This group wrapped up in blankets because of the severe cold of desert nights is awaiting the beginning of the show from their post on MDS. They are speculating on what the future months will bring, wondering what desert warfare is really like, and what it has in store for them. Their thoughts are probably of their homes, families, and friends engulfed by this global war, and of their American Field Service friends spread all over the Alamein Line, anxiously awaiting the greatest experience of their lives.

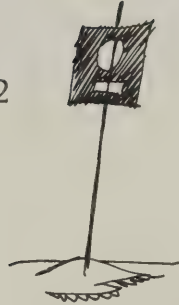
Morning discussion of forthcoming Peak
Somewhere in the Western Desert - 25 miles behind
the lines. Clifford Sater 10/22/42





"BREAKOUT"

Chapter 2



WE ARE READY

*We are ready NOW...The battle will be one of the decisive battles of history.
...The eyes of the world will be on us, watching anxiously which way the
battle will swing.*

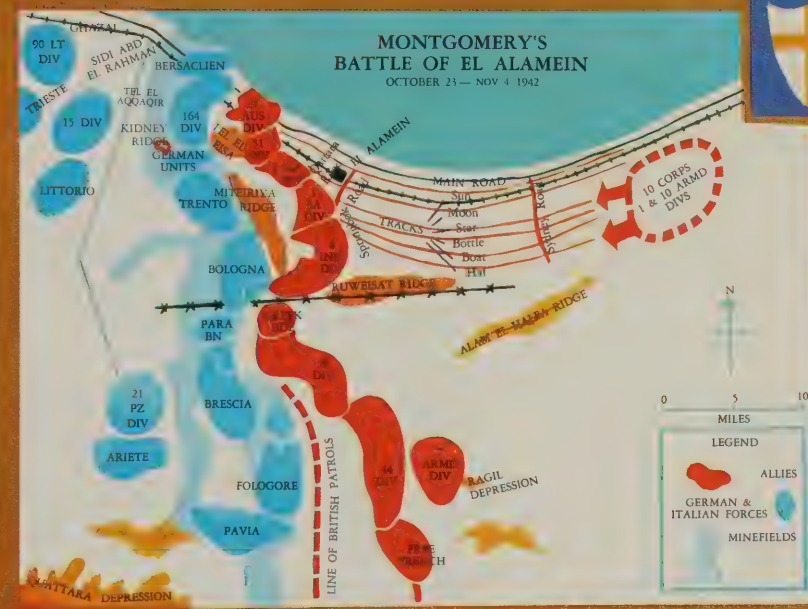
We can give them one answer at once, "It will swing our way."...

*AND LET NO MAN SURRENDER SO LONG AS HE IS UN-
WOUNDED AND CAN FIGHT...*

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S *dispatch to the troops,*
Alamein, 23 October, 1942



AUGUST 31 1942

[illegible]

THERE WERE two battles of El Alamein. The first was Rommel's attack at Alam El Halfa in August–September, 1942. That time he crept through the mine field and was pinned down by Montgomery's prepared positions, armor, and a three-day bombardment by the RAF. Rommel withdrew, losing more tanks than he could afford. It was the first blow to his chances of future victory and he failed to acquire the fuel and food he had set out to capture.

If he had succeeded, his Afrika Korps could have prolonged the war, run rampant through the Middle East, possibly outflanking the Russians from the southeast through the Caucasus or joining forces with the Japanese. So far the 8th Army had been susceptible to the wiles and strength of the Desert Fox.

In the second Alamein battle in October of the same year, the 8th Army was conscious of its chances of victory because of material superiority and the leadership of Montgomery and Alexander. In this first Allied offensive, there was action at both the northern and southern ends of our forty-mile line.

The attack to the south was of secondary importance but the idea was to delude Rommel into thinking that it was the main thrust. It was a confused shifting of brigades and divisions in line maneuvers to outfox the Desert Fox. An added deception was the placing far to the south of wooden dummy tanks with loud-speaker attachments which played recordings of the sound of tanks at night to entice German antitank equipment.

Rommel counterattacked these deceptive feints four times, shifting his panzers to meet the threats. Wasting his reserves of food and gasoline in these maneuvers, he abandoned many vehicles and thousands of Italians for want of supplies.

In the middle of the eleven-day offensive, there was the calculated risk of a standstill which would have given Rommel a chance to regroup his forces and to take the initiative. The strategy of Montgomery turned to concentrated tactics in the northern push, where the infantry had succeeded in penetrating the enemy's defenses.

His new plan for desert warfare, which made the infan-

try path clearers for tanks instead of tanks for infantry, did the trick; because between us and the open desert were barriers of mine fields and guns which had to be cleared before tanks could get through to where they could operate with ease. If he had sent them into battle in the first attack, they would have been slaughtered by the enemy guns. Montgomery held his armored force until the infantry had nudged its way mile by mile to the last line of the enemy's prepared defenses and secured them so that the tanks could battle and defeat the panzers around the hill of Tel el Aqqaqir. What was left of the panzers turned and fled. The battle was over and the chase was on.

The over-all report of the outer-crust struggle of El Alamein — eleven days and nights under fire, smoke, and the dust of battle, which rolled one way, then the other — was conveyed to us as vividly as the blood that dripped into pools on the floor of the ambulance from the badly wounded men and prisoners whose pain was numbed by morphine. Ambulance drivers not only got the first-hand information of a battle but witnessed the labor and aftermath of war.

Our units were scattered close to the various desert tracks along the front — in the north with the Australians, Highlanders, and New Zealanders; to their left with the South Africans and Indians; in the south with the Greek Brigade and the 22nd Armoured Brigade, the spearhead of the 50th and 44th Divisions; and further south on the edge of the Qattara Depression with the Free French.

All six tracks, called Sun, Moon, Star, Bottle, Boat, and Hat, ran laterally east and west to the coast road along the Mediterranean and the railroad tracks to El Alamein Station. They intersected the roads that ran north from Hat Track in the south, the Qattara Road close to the front, the Springbok Road which led to Alamein Station and Sydney Road at the rear.

Along these tracks and roads which became ankle deep in dust and gutted with ruts from the churning of heavy rolling equipment, all casualties were moved back to the 8th South African CCS at Shammam Halt on Sydney Road between the junction of Bottle and Boat Tracks.

Under the pressure of battle, its three long wards cared for six hundred or more wounded. Each ward consisted of eight or more EPIP tents set in a row, at the end of which

was an operating theater and team. After treatment the wounded were carried further back. The worst cases were evacuated to a hospital train at Imaiyid five miles away.

Stand-by ambulances were in a wadi close by. They were waved in by orderlies to move patients back or to transport them from ward to ward. When they were off on runs, they were replaced by 15th Company headquarters car pool which was a mile away down the track.

When ambulances were loaded, the driver started his run; a mile and a half east to Sydney Road, then north to the coast road, east again for eighteen to twenty miles, south to El Hammam, and then through a rough stretch of four miles to Gharbaniyat. Unloaded, he returned on a shorter and rougher route.

The twenty-five ambulances used in the operation alone traveled a total of 2,640 miles and transported 342 wounded on one of the busiest days. During the offensive there were many such days, for the lot of the ambulance drivers was twenty-four-hour duty. The first ambulance left camp at daylight and the last returned before midnight.

We Kids were on runs from an ADS of the 3rd Light Field Ambulance to the CCS. Al and Spike were off with an armored reconnaissance unit.

At about six o'clock in the evening of "D" day, Buck Kahlo, Hazy, and myself hectically dug our slit trenches within talking distance of each other. Our shoveling was interrupted briefly by low-strafig Messerschmidts coming from the north along the line of 25-pounder batteries, one of which was a hundred yards away from our slit trenches. These enemy air attacks became a daily habit at this hour of the evening. They came in so low we waved at the pilot and he waved back. The danger was not so much the strafing but the small-arms fire that burst all around us from troops trying to down the plane. The ten-day blitz by the RAF and American air force preceding the battle had reduced the air strength of the enemy, thus he resorted to night-fighter harassing, with punctual afternoon bombing and strafing every morning and evening.

Knowing that October 24 would be a busy day for us, we lay in our slit trenches hoping to get some sleep. We smoked incessantly and talked about the Aussies and Scots who were carrying the main attack that night. The night was still and clear. Tension was high and we waited. The

nearly full moon lit up the stage of battle. At 9:40 P.M. the curtain went up on our war debut. An artillery orchestra of a thousand varied pieces opened fire as if obeying the baton of an invisible conductor. The bass of terrific explosions came from the sea where the navy had rushed out under cover of night and was hurling shells against enemy shore positions. The air shivered and hummed with the piercing of thousands of shells, and along the moonlit horizon ran the staccato flame from the mouths of the massed 25-pounders. The sky was lit for miles by the constant flashes of the guns.

At regular intervals the guns in one sector would stop firing long enough to let their hot barrels cool in the fresh night air. The barrage was co-ordinated to drop a shell on the enemy at seven-yard intervals. The core of their thunder burst all around us a hundred yards on either side as a battery let loose. Our faces were lit up by the brilliance of each explosion. Our emotions were numbed by the weight of the barrage. Behind us the 60-pounders opened up and tore the sky apart. The sound of their shells whistling over us was weird. Everything was close and the ground shook violently. It was a frightening thing but we were secure in the knowledge that it was not directed toward us.

Now and then Hazy and I, hypnotized by our thoughts and feelings, would grope for conversation. We'd end up with questions to each other as to how we were feeling mid this breath-taking skull-crushing noise and what its effects on Jerry were.

As I lay on my back looking up at the star-studded sky and moon, a million thoughts ran through my mind; how small man is in the universe, how his intelligence has made him the most stupid and vicious of all the animals. Even in this mad *mêlée*, the desert got into you and made you a philosopher. Strangely Roosevelt's words, "You have nothing to fear but fear itself," ran through my head like a repeated radio commercial and I also remembered the reactions to the baptism of fire of the Civil War private in Stephen Crane's book *The Red Badge of Courage*.

I turned over in my slit trench and tried to go to sleep. The vibration of the guns was transmitted through the earth. At each fired explosion I felt as if someone had clubbed me over the head and the sand and rocks slid

down on me from the sides of the trench. Though the night was chilly, I was perspiring.

Around 2 A.M. the barrage lessened and gradually quieted down. These roaring barrages were to continue nightly, building up to a crescendo till November 3, the date of the breakthrough. This first night was a sleepless one; but with the others that followed, we managed to acclimate ourselves to snooze between runs.

By first light the casualties came in and Buck came over and started us off on our first runs back to the MDS. Though we carried severely wounded men, the gore of blood was well hidden by the bandaging and treatment they had had before coming to us. Very few moaned and groaned. They were quite calm from the morphine. Some were talkative, others quiet; some glad to get out of it, others sorry they could not still be with their buddies up front; none bemoaned their fate out of pain. They all were good-natured and above all patient. Some were amputees nearly bandaged. It was amazing what doctors could do up forward in a tent with a stretcher across sawhorses for an operating table.

Our job was nerve-racking. Our prime concern was to get these men back for further treatment without causing them additional pain or damage. The tracks were hub deep in dust which covered the holes and ruts; we drove slowly, sometimes at a crawl. Water trucks ran up and down dampening the tracks against the fogging dust. When we had unloaded, we raced back. Our work was to be steady for the next week or so but not as rushed as it was the first two days and nights.

With the wounded came the griff. The 8th Army had hit the Afrika Korps where it was strongest and had begun to nudge Jerry from his strongholds along the coast. The Kiwis and Highlanders gained their objectives. The right and left jabbing of the South African Division connected with a left hook. The Aussies were partly successful. The enemy counterattacked against the South Africans and Australians but all objectives reached were held with heavy casualties on both sides. The Indians carried on raids in the south center of the line, holding dug-in positions for their companies to move in. In the south the 22nd Armoured Brigade established a bridgehead and the Fighting French were in position behind Himeimet.

Heavy fighting continued all night with stiff resistance, but by dawn all final objectives had been reached. Two tape-marked corridor tracks had been pushed through the mine-field belts and the infantry moved forward for a penetration of nearly six miles. In the southern sector, the attack had served its purpose as a main diversion.

Night and day the reports came from the front. The Kiwis took Miteriya Ridge and held it. The King's Royal Rifles took Woodcock. The Queen's Bays and the 9th Lancers were well forward and sought revenge for the tank battle defeat at Knightsbridge in June. A counteroffensive was beaten off by the 2nd Rifles and Aussies. Units which were badly cut up were replaced by fresh troops.

During the eleven days of battle before the breakout the sky was filled with a hodgepodge of planes — fighters, heavy and light bombers of the Luftwaffe, and American fighting units attached to the RAF.

Many times anti-aircraft batteries let go unexpectedly from all sides. You looked up into the bright blue cloudless sky and saw silver streaks darting about. They were high Messerschmidts and Spitfires in a dogfight. The rattle of machine guns drifted down to you. White puffs sprinkled the blue. The Messerschmidts dived and circled and then turned and fled to the north. The Spits circled us protectingly, masters of the air. The batteries ceased firing.

Further up the line, coming and going across the pale blue sky, would fly the Boston Havocs, eighteen of them in close arrowhead formation, flown by South Africans. Beside and above them flew their fighter escort. Then a flight of eighteen Mitchells (B-25's) of the American 12th Medium Bomber Group escorted by their American 57th Fighter Group. Shortly afterward, the Stukas attacked Hurricanes and got in among them. Three were shot down. Spitfires got into a dogfight with 109's (Messerschmidts), diving, twisting and turning to get each other in their gun sights. This time two Messerschmidts came down streaming long wakes of smoke. One parachute opened and floated slowly to earth. The Ju-88's came over in force. Several were shot down. The Stukas came again and again high above a solid curtain of ack-ack. They peeled and dived straight through it. Your spine tingled with their daring. Many were caught in the umbrella of puffing steel. More spiraled down in wakes of falling smoke. Eighteen

Baltimores went over with fighter escort and were attacked. The sky was one hell of a bust-up. Suddenly the men along the line cheered, a fighter swooped by with the American insignia on the fuselage. He dipped his wings to the right and left and disappeared over the next dune. The bombers were coming home, this time much lower and losing altitude.

We counted eighteen. Many a time we prayed when one or two were missing or were stragglers whom we tried mentally to push home.

At night our Wellingtons and night fighters pounded the enemy and we were lit up for bombing by Jerry flares dropped from Ju-88's and night fighters. They hung on parachutes and were remarkably stationary and glaring. They flooded the ground beneath with a phosphorescent yellow or white light. You lay there exposed in the glare and followed the noise of the invisible plane motor. Sprays of luminous red tracer ack-ack floated up, criss-crossing searchingly for their target. You hoped the hailstone metal would not land on you, though you heard some of it clanking against other objects. The crunch of a string of bombs far away came to your ears and you were thankful.

Our air force continued its all-out efforts against the enemy. Fighter bombers were flying far beyond the front, strafing and bombing his supply columns and smashing his airdromes to prevent his planes from getting into the air, and when they did, intercepting them. Our planes left over a hundred vehicles wrecked and burning at Fuka. At the El Daba airport, bogged down by rain, they struck and accounted for eighty aircraft. Every countermove by Rommel was reported. Transport planes flew supplies forward and wounded back.

On the night of the breakout, every gun along the front went mad with a creeping barrage. Sweeping right and left, they poured steel at an unbelievable rate. The sky was afire. The noise struck men dumb. Behind this wall of steel the Indians moved with the Highlanders. Over the din of battle, the wail of the bagpipes sparked the clans, the Black Watch, the Camerons, and the Highland Light Infantry. Beyond the range of the guns, the air force took over. Wellingtons bombed ahead of infantry. Hurricanes equipped for tank busting and wireless jamming attacked enemy tanks. The Indians took Kidney Ridge. The wedge

was driven. The enemy, dazed and shell-happy, fled madly from the wail of the pipes and the flashing steel of the Ladies from Hell. The South Africans in armored cars raced through to the enemy's rear, shooting up transport. The 11th Hussars charged in. The Shermans, Grants, Crusaders, Valentines, and Honeyys poured through to the west. With the armor, the Kiwis went into motion, bypassing enemy rear guards in the south. Everyone turned north to the coast road for the kill and the cities of men built up at El Alamein disappeared.

Our activity increased with the battle. Everything moved fast; wounded came in with only preliminary first aid. The dead and wounded were carried until our backs seemed broken. Some of us worked forty-eight hours without rest or food, right in the middle of hell. Surgeons worked tirelessly on wrecks of humanity. Jewish medical teams from the Palestinian army worked impartially on Germans shot up and hopelessly shattered. Now and then, stretcher bearers carried away a tightly rolled blanket containing what was once a man; and shortly a padre blessed a new grave. There was a steady stream of patients in and out of the operating theaters and from one ambulance to another. Blood transfusions and intravenous feedings were administered among the ever-present smells of ether and formaldehyde. Then came the prisoners, an overwhelming stream of numbed men stretching out as far as the eye could see. They walked across the sands to give themselves up; starving men who were unable to make their wants known, but obviously glad it was over. The tracks of El Alamein were left behind in the sands. And crosses — white crosses — marked the "Unknown British Soldier."

In the middle of the breakout, I found myself among the casualties, horizontal on a stretcher. I was cold one minute and hot the next. My jaws clicked like a Flamenco dancer's castanets. I shook, rattled, and rolled.

In the MDS tent an MO came over with a nurse; my temperature was taken and there was talk of the possibility of my having malaria, so I was given a blood test immediately. I was helpless in my shakes and passed a fitful, jarring night and awoke from a spasmodic sleep still with fever.

I was sent back against my will, finding myself on the top stretcher tier of one of our ambulances, my head right

behind the driver who turned out to be Boo Boo. In placing the wounded, he had put me in this position which enabled us to chat. I learned that I had sandfly fever, and not the dreaded malaria. Not only had sand and rocks tumbled into my slit trench during the many nights of the barrage but the sandflies were aroused and had staged a barrage of their own on me and others. Because of the fatigue of battle and our lowered resistance they succeeded in downing many. The other casualties in the ambulance included badly shot-up but well-doped Highlanders, and a Tommy in my predicament. Boo Boo jounced us over the ruts as smoothly as possible to the hospital train at Imayid.

When he and an orderly carried me out and aboard the train a fear came over me of being lost and swallowed up in the evacuation shuffle. I didn't know when I would see the gang again, and above all I had lost the opportunity for recording the initial breakout into open country. Inwardly I cursed the fact that I was being evacuated, for I felt I would be on my pins again in a day or so. Many a man did not mind coming down in battle, but not being able to keep in touch hurt me more than a wound. The mind is a wonderful thing, but sometimes it overrates our strength and doctors know this well. I found it to be so later when, after I was wounded, I tried to paint brain operations and found I could not stand up and concentrate on painting. Now, not wanting to miss any more opportunities, and regardless of my fever, I managed to do a sketch of the interior of the No. 1 Egypt ambulance train with our wounded and many of the enemy, most of whom came out of their fright long enough to realize that they were being treated the same as we were.

In Cairo I was dumped into the long reception tent lined with rows of occupied stretchers. Just as I was dozing off for a much needed sleep after the hectic rush back, I was impatiently prodded by a couple of MO twins accompanied by a nurse, referred to as "preliminary observers." After their examination came the wait for an assignment to a ward. The nurses couldn't cope fast enough with the needs of the men, so those casualties who could get around helped their buddies, although it was like the halt leading the blind.

During the night in the tent I became violently nauseous and developed infectious hepatitis; I was moved to a Quon-

set hut, Ward J-4. I didn't know what was wrong until I woke up the next morning thinking I was surrounded by Japs. Everybody had yellow jaundice, a very common disease out there, especially at that time of year. It was generally thought to be caused by a virus, but this was debated, and some attributed it to the British army rations. The treatment was complete rest on a fat-free diet, and ours consisted of boiled fish and cabbage morning, noon, and night. Intermixed with this, we were stuffed with pills and a succession of fruit juices.

We slept under mosquito netting and blankets. Temperature taking and bedpans were heaped on us, sometimes to the point of embarrassment during visits by Cairo debutantes who passed out books and ice cream in the afternoon. I often wondered what they thought of us, for it took a strong stomach to look at a jaundiced face, glassy bloodshot eyes, and skin like an old parchment lampshade without shuddering. We lounged in bed, happy that we didn't have a thing to do for days but gaze at these visions of femininity and listen to their trifles of local gossip such as the wonderful shish-kebab dinner with salad and arak they had the night before. When they mentioned food our mouths watered.

Gradually we returned to our natural ash-gray color and the time came when we could get up and visit the canteen. With this momentous occasion came the wearing of hospital "blues" and I started painting again doing a sketch of the ward.

We listened to the B.B.C. over the ward radio and heard about the tremendous advance of the 8th Army in the desert and I felt sick at the thought that I wasn't with the gang. We heard many big-time entertainment programs sponsored by the American USO and British NAAFI. They were the closest thing to home and worth a thousand letters. Many a man wiped away a tear at hearing one of his favorite entertainers and songs. One day, right in the midst of a transcribed Bob Hope program, came a silent interruption and we waited tensely for some sort of news communiqué and the familiar calm voice of the announcer, but instead he spoke excitedly and electrified the ward. The Americans had landed in French North Africa, General Eisenhower with an Allied Force of Americans and British.



ADS OPERATING THEATER



ADMINISTERING PLASMA

The news report gave no idea of the size of the force involved but it obviously was an invasion of major importance. I swelled inside when one Tommy called me "Yank" and I wondered whether my old Company C of the 29th Infantry with the 4th Division was in on it. This was a moving experience for us Americans, for word spread like wildfire through wards and hospital grounds. Many chaps in my ward had served in all the campaigns out there — in Crete, in Greece, in Syria, in Egypt and Libya. Some had been at Dunkirk. They reacted with tremendous admiration and enthusiasm; they shouted, laughed, and speculated; "It won't be long now, chum — this time we'll make it!"

I was discharged from the hospital and given a fourteen-day convalescent leave to be spent at a well-known British rest camp, notoriously renowned for boot-training its men back to shape. But I finagled my rest cure in Cairo, which seemed like the melting pot of the world after my desert and hospital sojourn. The weather was soft and warm. This was the warmth that European tourists bought in winter. I reported to AFS headquarters with my medical orders and was given permission to rest at the Continental where I made plans for a trip to Lebanon.

The first thing I did was to walk to Groppi's tea garden where I had two chocolate ice cream sodas. Groppi's was a colorful spot with garden lights strung through the trees. Everybody congregated there, especially overripe pretty young girls. I hailed a gharri and drove leisurely around the city; it was nice to just stare dreamily and observe the sights without having to rush anywhere. I felt I had earned the right to a real holiday, my first since I had left the States. As it got dark, the lighted windows of shops — jewelers', furriers', photographers' — gleamed like a Christmas tree. I bought a horsetail fly whisk with an ivory handle for the desert pests and a swagger stick. The customary friendly bartering ritual took place before I made my purchases. The stick contained a concealed blade for protection. In the hospital I had found that a lot of our boys were casualties not from battle but from traveling alone in the by-streets and being rolled by the native thugs. I wasn't taking any chances.

Confronted with the jaundiced vendors and beggars in the streets and the highway robbers in stores, the soldier

Aboard A Hospital Train — No 1 Egypt Ambulance Train
11/2/42



JERRY WOUNDED

This painting was done while I was being evacuated to a base hospital, after coming down with sandfly fever. I had a temperature of 104° . Each car carries 30 bunks, three tiers deep, with medical officers, nurses and orderlies in attendance. There is no segregation between enemy wounded and our own boys. In the right foreground is my sketch book where I had been working lying down. In the right foreground center is a patient who was a Jerry. It was amazing to hear the conversation of the men, knowing that they had enemy wounded in their compartment. They were all quite courteous in seeing to it that the prisoners received as good treatment as they themselves — for instance, One German had had part of his jaw shot away and one New Zealander who happened to be lying in the bunk opposite him would call the nurse or orderly to attend him.

Aboard a hospital train - 11/2/42
No. 1 Egypt ambulance train

Clifford Faber





ADMINISTERING PLASMA

surmises that Egypt is a nation of thieves and beggars. I had a galli-galli boy of ten fleece me of some loose money while he fascinated me producing baby chicks from solid eggs. The average conversation a soldier had with Egyptians was an abrupt, "*Imshi Yallah!*" ("Scram — on your way!"). But whenever the soldier had an opportunity to learn more about the lowliest native, he found a primitive philosopher of gentleness and courtesy.

Politeness is the first requirement of personal contact with Egyptians. One doesn't demand but rather requests. The servant in the hotel, the man in the little shop, and the fellah in the field valued a smiling face, or a simple Arabic phrase from a phonetic dictionary as a sign of good will and you were treated like a king.

I had dinner at the El Hati, a harem-like native restaurant. Red-tarbooshed Sudanese waiters, nightgowned and with red waistbands, served shish-kebab right from an open charcoal-fire trough tended by chefs similarly dressed. They all bore scars on their faces reminiscent of those of Heidelberg dueling students.

The aroma and smog from the skewered chunks of lamb and onions permeated the main high-ceilinged dining room.

The service was excellent and strange. To call a waiter you merely clapped your hands and your waiter came. Now and then you heard the lead-off phrase to an order: "*Isma, ya Sidi*" ("Listen to me, sir"). The place echoed with the beat of this clapping and if you closed your eyes, you would think a dancer was about to appear. I was so taken by the oriental atmosphere and service of this restaurant that I designed a modern American air-conditioned counterpart for my own amusement during a rainy day in the desert.

As you came out into the night, the dust-laden air and unwashed streets were filled with city noise and the songs of soldiers who had consumed too much beer. Cairo was not in the front line but you thought it was just around the next corner because of the presence of so many desert-stained men on leave. They relished this lazy spree after the ordeals of combat. They were all over town, sometimes accompanied by women in uniform and usually followed by basheesh urchins. The Egyptians who didn't like the war but were out for a fast buck enticed them into bars dubbed after pet army names, the Anzac, the Spitfire, the



"IMPRESSION IN A BASE HOSPITAL"

British Second General Hospital Ward 9-4

11/3/42

This particular ward is strictly for malaria, sandfly fever, and yellow jaundice cases. Practically everyone who has been in the desert has come down with one of those ailments at one time or another. In the painting can be seen the scores of mosquito nets which were compulsory for everyone to sleep under at night. The hospital uniforms of the British are royal blue suits, white shirts, and red ties. We Americans who have managed to get into a British hospital always refer to them as "zoot suits." I occupied this particular ward when I came down with a touch of sandfly fever, yellow jaundice, and neuralgia to boot. On the door is a dart board which is used a great deal by the Tommies. A red screen in front of the cot, like the one in the right center background of the picture, is used when someone is very ill. The medical attention given is excellent.

British 2nd General Hospital
Ward J9
11/3/42
Hilford Faber



Tomahawk Bar, and Churchill's Bar. Large "V" signs were painted all over the places to attract trade.

When they weren't desert-happy, the troops were leave-happy and they openly expressed their criticism of the "base-wallahs," the staff men of GHQ, Middle East, whose duties kept them permanently at base. They fared worse at this jibing than probably any other staff people in the war. Because of their gabardine uniforms, they were called "the gabardine swine" or "the chairborne division" or the "Short Range Shephard's Group" in comparison to the "Long Range Desert Group."

Added to the din of the troops was the wild revelry of the natives. It was the month of Ramadan, a Mohammedan month of fasting which terminated each day with night-fall. During the thirty days of solemn observance of Mohammed's divine revelation, the true believer abstains from dawn to sunset from all eating, drinking, smoking, bathing, and delights of the body but each night he makes like New Year's Eve on Times Square.

Standing on the stairway in the foyer of the Continental Hotel, I watched the crowd below. Intermingled with the uniformed men, young male Cairenes in dinner jackets escorted women in low-cut evening gowns whose enticing perfume rose to the ceiling. Older men sat around eyeing them calculatingly. It was a breath-taking sight after so much khaki.

Life for me at the hotel during my convalescent period involved neither a long rest on its terrace nor the daily afternoon siesta of Cairo routine. Business hours were from nine o'clock in the morning till one in the afternoon with a prolonged lunch or siesta till four and then back to work till eight in the evening. Dinner and night life commenced at nine. An artist at work has no time schedule except a deadline, which often makes it necessary to work around the clock. I paid a social visit to the staff of the OWI on Sharia el Walda where Russell Barnes was the new director, and found myself a free-lance artist again. They were still without an art director and the urgency of getting some public propaganda posters was conveyed to me by Elmer Lower, who shared an apartment near the office with George Renz, a former professor at the American University of Cairo (now with Aramco in Saudi Arabia). I volunteered my services until my trip to Beirut.

Working in the hotel and shuttling by taxi to the OWI, I executed anti-Axis and pro-American Middle East Air Force posters which were used for newspaper reproduction and window displays.

Several times I shared a cab with Nick Parrino who lived in a pension in the center of town. As a photographer-reporter on a lend-lease Russian assignment, he had got as far as Kazvin, Iran, and no further, and while returning from an assignment in the Mediterranean, had narrowly escaped an enemy night fighter when the American transport he was on got lost after dark.

He took delight in directing the taxicab driver in Arabic, nudging me and looking proudly every time he spoke a phrase. The supposition that he was impressing me with his knowledge of Arabic dwindled after the taxi driver pulled some run-around shenanigans. Nick was really directing the driver, for if you were not on the alert he would take you all over town when your destination was a mere block away.

If you didn't ask about the running condition of a car, the driver would entice you into his cab which wouldn't start and would then expect you to tip him as you left in a huff.

Sometimes these shenanigans bordered on the comical. Often a nightshirted urchin would ride up front with the driver. He would dash off to ask the way when the cab stopped, he would then get lost, and the driver would get out to look for him and would have to ask the way himself. They would return together conversing with gestures and then the driver would drive around the wrong block.

As soon as I ascended the stairs to the sanctuary of the wide terrace of the late Shephard's Hotel away from vendors on its noisy street, I recalled the saying that if you waited long enough here you would meet everybody you knew. The chairs were filled with anticipants. The saying may have been exaggerated but I did come across "Ole" Oleson, whom I had sketched in Capetown, Commander Steele of the Royal Air Force, and Major Ben Stern, our old poker colleague. Stern was en route to the States from India and was kind enough to take a batch of thirty of my censored water colors home, which speeded their return for an exhibition.

The strangest meeting I had, halfway around the world,

was not at Shephard's but at the Grand Hotel which had been taken over by the United States Army. It took place in the narrow corridor of the fifth floor as I was about to knock on a friend's door. I was back to back with an occupant fidgeting with keys and a keyhole. The jingling made me turn. I asked whether I could be of any assistance, the soldier turned, and we were both surprised enough to utter the hackneyed, "It's a small world!" The soldier was Walter Bernstein, whom I had last seen at Benning and who was now passing through Cairo on an assignment for *Yank*. Today he is a gifted writer for the *New Yorker* magazine.

The Continental Hotel and its roof garden seemed like a second home to me after my desert and hospital sojourn. I met many hospitable and friendly people there, the Simon brothers, importers, from Bagdad and their cousin from Cairo, Maurice Zilka, of the Zilka Bank in Cairo; Tarek Yaffi, an importer from Bombay, India; and Hage Boutros, an international lawyer from Alexandria. I made new friends and later got to know them well.

Abdullah and Maurice Simon were Iraqi Jews; both were in the States when I returned. Abdullah served an army hitch upon entering the States; and Maurice, the younger of the two brothers, an Egyptian bey, resumed his importing business since he was not able to enter the services.

These three young Cairenes showed me the heart of the Moslem city and the favorite eating haunts of its colorful people which were rarely mentioned in guidebooks and maps. They took me from the Pyramids and Sphinx, at the Mena House, to the mosques, to the antiquities of the museum, to All Saints Cathedral, the American church off the Midan Soliman Pasha, to horse races at Gezira, to the Bab-el-Louk, the fellaheen fruit market, to a houseboat on the Nile, and past the Opera House to the narrow alleys of the Musky which was crossing the dividing line of Cairo between East and West, Europe and Islam. Here you found the artisans of the East working on copper and silver in the open alleys among the perfumes of Araby. If you wished, Musky boys guided you and served you Turkish coffee at the beckoning of a shop owner.

Tarek Yaffi, who made yearly visits to Cairo from India, was one of those Lebanese traders who migrated all over the world — the Gold Coast, South Africa, South America,

Mexico, and the United States. Surprised to hear me conversing in his Arabic dialect with Abdullah at the lobby desk, he introduced himself. He was a mustached young man who wore a tall tarboosh. We dined one evening and again later at the Bardia Club, where he initiated me to my first glimpse of a belly dancer. The incident was quite amusing.

Bardia's was a native version of an English music hall or a glorified American burlesque house with one difference — food and liquor were served. Its private cubicles extended around the orchestra floor to the stage. The smoke was so thick from cigars, cigarettes, and Turkish water pipes that a London fog seemed mild by comparison.

The native orchestra, consisting of an oud (fourteenth-century lute), a violin, a zither, a shepherd's bamboo flute, a tambourine, and a thirbackey (an open-end bongo drum held under the arm and thumped with the fingers), played weird and exotic music which elicited praise and shouts from the fezzed audience. While the musicians played, they munched food and drank zibib, an alcoholic grape drink flavored with aniseed. This drink, whose effect is strong but slow in coming, is clear as gin but when mixed with water or ice turns milky. Its mellowness is best enhanced if you eat while sipping. Egyptian zibib was inferior in quality to the Lebanese arak of Zahle. Cairenes paid unbelievable prices to get a bottle of the latter stuff.

The Egyptian nautch dancers were enticingly and excitingly bejeweled from head to toe. They had kohled eyes, wore chandelier earrings, and left their tummies exposed. The costumes of some were covered with gold coins which supposedly represented the men in their life. Tiaras were worn tilted above one eye, crowning the long black hair which hung sensuously about and over their oriental garments down to their waists and which with movement flared like their venus-girdle skirts of silk.

A spotlight announced and followed each dancer who whirled subtly onto the darkened stage. Without peeling a single stitch of clothing, she put the male audience into frenzy. As the gyrating dance progressed, they clapped rhythmically and expressed their emotions uninhibitedly, shouting and stamping.

I sat in one of the center boxes drinking Scotches cut with water while Tarek eyed my reactions to the scene.

One girl caught my fancy and I thought it would be pleasant to paint a female for a change after the months of soldier reporting — especially one of these rarely seen "little Egyptians." Using my host as an interpreter and playing the strict role of an American G.I., I had the dancer join us between her two performances.

She was as glamorous close up as Ava Gardner but blunt of manner. Eighteen years old, she had been married at fourteen, had a child, and knew Farouk. Consuming splits of champagne like water (she undoubtedly received a percentage on each bottle), she consented to pose in costume at the hotel and quoted a fantastic modeling fee. The price astounded me and I forgot my English and astounded her with Arabic. Surprised, she left silently through the loge's velvet curtains as if stung by an asp.

Hage Boutros, a Lebanese who practiced law in Egypt, was most congenial and informative. As a child, he had known my grandfather and he introduced me to a man who had worked for him. He also knew my aunt and her family in Lebanon, where he spent his summer vacations. It was his briefing about some of the places of my ancestry that persuaded me to take advantage of my leave and journey up to the mountains at this time.

At the Allied airport of Heliopolis, I spent hours trying to hitch a ride to Beirut, Lebanon, the Land of the Golden Journey. The OWI was expecting me in Beirut that day and I was most anxious to meet my mother's oldest sister, Malvina, and her family. They did not know that I was in the Middle East and I had never met them. They lived somewhere in the mountains in a village called Bikfaya.

Shifting my portfolio from one shoulder to the other when one became numb with the weight of crammed paper and clothing, I wobbled to the RAF and then to the USAAF hangars in search of an ATS (Allied or American Transport Supply) flight. There were none in that direction that day.

Since my sick leave was half over, I was prepared to give up the idea until the end of the war; then a dispatcher suggested I try the French Air Transport at the other end of the field. One of their planes, which was warming up, usually headed for the Levant.

I reached it breathlessly before it taxied off but I was disappointed again. It was a special private plane for Gen-

eral Catroux and his braided staff whom I watched file into the aircraft.

Turning to head back for Cairo, I met Colonel Dassonville, whom I had interviewed and painted aboard ship. He was the Free French War Minister to De Gaulle who frequently made incognito trips to Cairo from his African capital in Brazzaville. After hearing about my difficulty, he entered the plane and shortly peeked from its open side door, motioning me to come aboard. He introduced me to the general and his bearded aides and I was given a comfortable reclining seat. The tri-motor took off and I felt most lucky and grateful to Dassonville. I did no sketching and conversed very little but stared out the plane window. This was one time I could have painted but regretfully didn't.

Below spread the delta; large quilt-like patches of varied green cultivation and blue lakes sewn with threads of winding muddy streams and ditches on a suede blanket of desert. Another look and we were over Ismalia, crossing the draftsman's straight line of the Suez Canal, and then nothing below but desert, the Sinai Desert, lumpy miles and miles of it in all directions, with no slit trenches but camel tracks and now and then signs of life. Looking down at it from the other end of the battle stick, I thought what well-defined targets we were at the mercy of an expert marksman. This thought rambled off as we flew over the green cultivation and settlements of Palestine, now Israel, and the white abstract forms of Tel-Aviv. A thunderstorm tilted us in an air pocket over Haifa. Clearly ahead were the blue mountains of Lebanon and somewhere in them I knew somebody. Then Beirut, beautifully situated on a promontory which extends three miles into the Mediterranean — white houses, beaches, blue sea as lovely as and quite like the California coast.

On arrival at the Beirut airport which was serviced by a Lebanese staff, I felt at home for no one questioned my native dialect. Members of the American legation met the Catroux group and I got a ride with an American colonel to the OWI, where I met the staff headed by George Britt, George Bookman, John Snedaker, and Nadim Makdasi, a young Lebanese who later came to the States, became a citizen, and worked for the Voice of America.

I was the first American of Lebanese extraction to visit the capital since the war started. My OWI friends imme-

diately postponed my visit to Bikfaya, a short commuting drive up into the surrounding mountains, proposed a tour of the country which my military traveling orders would not allow, and in the space of a few hours held a cocktail party and interview for the press. The reporters took no notes, which I thought unusual — their articles verified this; different interpretations appeared in the French, English, and Arabic dailies and even my name was spelled differently in each.

That night George Bookman and I did Beirut well on mixed drinks. Starting with martinis at the party, we dropped in at the Normandy, then moved to the French Club for arak and a bite of food; later, glowing steadily in stages, to the Nuits Blanches, Bar Russe, and George's Bar. All over town the cozy French "*J'attendrai*" was played by accordian and violin combos. We wound up at 1 A.M. in the "*salle de reception*" of Pension Mimosa, an officers' brothel. It was appropriately decorated with one Stars and Stripes, a couple of Union Jacks, and a portrait of Queen Victoria. It had the best bacon and eggs and iced beer in Beirut. The establishment did almost as much business downstairs as in the upstairs rooms. The madam frowned upon noise, and inebriation meant instant expulsion. Despite the bloodshot eyes, we had bacon and eggs. I spent the night at the Hotel Saint George, which juts out into the Mediterranean. The sound of its waves beating below and against the pillars of my room lulled me to sleep. The hotel's name and site signified that St. George killed the marine dragon somewhere along this coast.

Lebanon has a cosmopolitan outlook. Three languages are spoken, French, Arabic, and English. Its two universities, the American University and the French Université at Beirut, stand today where the famous Academy of Law for the Roman Empire once reigned for three centuries. Their scholarships have graduated professional and administrative men. They have promoted more good will and produced more constructive results than any other program fostering unity. I visited the American University and met its president at the time, Bayard Dodge. Its campus is comparable to Cornell's.

The interest of its emigrants added to Lebanon's cosmopolitan face. Like the ancient Phoenicians the Lebanese are traders whose business takes them far and wide around



"OLE" OLESON

the world. They generally send money home and often in old age retire here.

Lebanon is unique among the Middle Eastern countries in having a Christian majority, of which the Maronites are the strongest church, with some Roman Catholics and a number of Orthodox churches — the Greek, Syrian, and Armenian. The Moslems include the strange cult of the Druses, most of whom live in the mountains. Strangely these many religious sects have survived in the Middle East.

Beirut is the largest port on this coast, and the rambling city with its many American cars seems to be nothing but a huge garage. There are garages for taxis and buses to all outlying districts.

The history of Beirut is long and interesting. It was a Phoenician city of great antiquity, mentioned in existing tablets of the fifteenth century B.C. and called Berytus by the Greeks and Romans.

When the Saracens overran Syria, Beirut fell into their power, and during the many wars of the Crusades, it often changed hands.

In the second half of the nineteenth century it was under the dominance of the Turks. After World War I it became a French Mandate, and today is the capital of a democracy.

Famous for its missionary and philanthropic institutions, it has a literacy rate as high as most western countries.

In the morning I grabbed a fast bite and a delicious cup of café au lait at a sidewalk café, and then found the Garage Bikfaya in the bourse. The taxi driver refused to budge until he had a full load of four passengers at two Lebanese pounds apiece. I offered to pay the difference if he would take me up the mountain immediately, but he spread his hands and gestured to me to take my time. A young French officer got into the cab and we waited for more arrivals. I finally forced the driver to accept three fares from me and we moved. Whereas the Egyptian taxi drivers were out to get your money by wasting time, these chaps were out to save time and scared the wits out of you doing it. I always thought New York cab drivers were tops in maneuvering in congested traffic, but the Beirut drivers go them one better — they can make a turn on two wheels and still remain upright. They are known as the hot-rod goats of the S-turn mountain roads.

As we passed through the city streets, the driver was

most courteous. He stopped innumerable times to chat and pass the time of day with friends he met along the road, inquiring, "*Keef halack, Ya?*" ("How are you, there?") The "*Ya*" was his absent-minded substitute for a person's name. Now and then we were stopped by flocks of sheep and goats; not content with talking to his friends the driver also gabbed away amiably with the herders. When we pulled out of the city and started to climb we picked up speed along the mountain turns that had no guide railings.

We were on the road to one of the snow-covered summits of Lebanon, Mt. Sannin, which has an altitude of 9,000 feet. The road winds around a mountain range about 6,000 feet high. Each winding rises higher through the villages of Dahr Essouan, Ain-Aar, Beit-Chabab to Bikfaya and to the next village above it, Dhour-Choueir, with its summer resort hotel surrounded by umbrella pines.

Suddenly the trees appeared along the western (seaward) slopes, evergreen oaks and pines clothing the mountainsides, and, as we climbed to the terraced heights, fig trees, grapevines, mulberry and olive trees abounded on the terraces and in the picturesque glens. Corn and wheat were cultivated in every possible nook, while up ahead atop almost perpendicular rocks, convents and monasteries crowned the summits. And as we drove upward, water poured out of rocks and fountains of ains. The howah, the mountain air, changed, and my whole body and spirit sensed the coolness.

In the distance I heard a Lebanese yodeler. His voice rebounded between the mountains and was picked up by another yodeler answering him. Lebanon is known for both its scenic beauty and customs as the Switzerland of the Middle East.

The taxi driver knew the occupants of every village house along the route. The buildings were typically Mediterranean with walls made of thick hand-hewn limestone blocks, red tiled roofs and terrazzo floors, surrounded by stone terraces and gardens. After dispatching the French officer at a house before we entered Bikfaya, the driver let me off in front of my aunt's house which faced the Greek Orthodox church and school, in front of which a priest gowned in black wearing a stovepipe hat was talking to some playing children. I noticed briefly their inquisitive eyes and smiles at the sight of a man in uniform as I turned



FLIGHT COMMANDER STEELE

toward my aunt's house. None of us had ever met and I had a strange feeling when the door opened. I didn't know who I would meet.

It was a great shock, because the first to greet me, my cousin Fuad Khoury, was the image of my brother. Then came my cousins Yvonne, Elie, and Nouhad, and finally my Uncle George. Between tears of joy and hugs and kisses in the French manner, I was taken inside. But I was in for a great disappointment, for Aunt Malvina was in Jerusalem with another cousin Odette, seeing the new grandchild. With the restrictions on communications, there was no way of notifying her that I was there.

Inside their cozy house, I absorbed them as though I were painting their portraits. They were light of skin, rosy cheeked, and looked Nordic. They were clean, vigorous, and attractive, and their house was immaculate. I was delighted with the luxury of modern plumbing again, and as I bathed in the privacy of a tub I kept up a running conversation with them in three languages through the slightly opened bathroom door.

Although my aunt wasn't at home, her family outdid themselves entertaining me. It must have been quite a hardship on them for food was rationed but they seemed to love doing it. I had never realized that I had so many relatives. I was invited to all their homes where what was to have been a fifteen-minute visit invariably ended as two or three hours over coffee and their wonderful food, plus some of the best arak I have ever tasted.

In the evening there was singing and dancing. To accompany this there was the music of a khoud or lute, a violin, and a thirrbackey. The village poet came to these soirees and sang extemporaneous yids or songs about me and my widely scattered family. I wished for a recording apparatus, for never again will I be credited with such great exploits.

Added to all the cousins in Bikfaya who descended upon me en masse for information concerning relatives overseas was a siege of people from other villages who had seen the Beirut papers carrying the OWI release of my presence in the mountains and came seeking word of a loved one in America.

It was an extra burden on my aunt's family, not only because of rationing but because it was a social sin not

to be hospitable. It was wonderful but eventually became too much and I beat a hasty retreat to the mountain studio fortress of Isa Jamiel. I was accompanied by two cousins who acted as bodyguards, Alex Akl and Michel Thouma, the latter of whom was Minister of Telegraphs of Lebanon at the time, and today is Minister of the Bureau of Tourist Information.

Jamiel, who fortunately for me had foreseen this dilemma coming, had extended an invitation. He had studied in Paris and had returned to Lebanon to paint, and now suggested that we start an art school there. He was a most gifted artist and an excellent technician. The villagers disregarded this for he shocked their strict morals by painting from his nude model out in the open on his terrace among the surrounding rocks. They talked more about this than the works he sold in Europe.

The four of us sat relaxed on the terrace taking in the mountain air, sipping Turkish coffee and eating fruit. Their faces grinned with pride as they saw my American reactions to the grandeur of the surrounding land. As I gazed around at the ever-present snow cap of Jebel Sannin, one of them and then another proudly volunteered information about the country. Lebanon or Liban means white and the term is used either because of the white limestone or because snow covers the peaks most of the year. Arabs call it Jebel Libnan.

The Bible locates Lebanon north of the Promised Land. Two ranges run in parallel lines from southwest to northeast with a long valley between them called El-Bikaah. In Latin the eastern range was called Anti-Libanus (over against Lebanon), whereas the natives called it Jebel-esh-Shurky or East Mountain, while Lebanon proper where we were was called Jebel-el-Ghurby, the West Mountain. The southern mountain of this range was known to sacred writers as Hermon.

Northeast, using Sannin as a focal point, Jamiel pointed toward the famous cedars and talked of Becharre close by where Khalil Gibran, author and illustrator of *The Prophet*, was born and laid to rest after living and working in America for about thirty years.

Due north beyond the lofty peak of Sannin lay the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbeck, the showplace of Lebanon and once the Heliopolis of the Greeks and Romans renowned



COLONEL HECTOR DASSONVILLE

as a place of sun worship. As I visualized the grandeur of its ruins so often described and photographed, the thought of war came to mind, for Syria was just beyond and the AFS was still working there.

Strategically Syria, if it had been captured by the Germans, would have isolated Turkey from the British, left Iraq and its oil fields at the mercy of the Nazis, and put Hitler in a position to stage a double-pronged drive through Palestine and Trans-Jordan to the Suez Canal and across Iraq and Iran to the borders of India.

The British had fought and defeated the Vichy French in Lebanon and Syria a year earlier and prevented a German infiltration. Somewhere in the mountains along the route to Damascus the AFS had a rest camp and was still carrying out its duties with the survivors and the natives who hated the French for exploiting them.

As I looked west between the great mountains on this narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean my thoughts turned to the sea of the ancient Phoenicians who extended their trading empire as far as Cornwall, England, and the Ivory Coast. Here in Lebanon they had developed port cities of industry and trade such as Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Arward, Beirut and Ras Shamara, the last three being subsidiary centers.

Looking down between the great limestone mountains, I saw little villages with houses nestling along the sides. Once these mountains were densely covered with trees, not only the famous cedars of Lebanon but forests of pines. Today all that is left are a few groves of umbrella pines and about two hundred cedars that have been growing down through the centuries.

The denuding of the mountain timber, the only source of wood in the area, began over five thousand years ago with the building of temples and ships in ancient Egypt, then Palestine, then Rome. Today reforestation has been started by this young democracy, but it will be a long time before it recaptures its ancient look.

Two centuries' evidence of the Crusades, that most dramatic encounter between Christianity and Islam, still remains in the ruins of castles in Lebanon.

I spent my last evening with my aunt's children over an excellent Arabic dinner cooked by Yvonne. While Eli clowning a bit, Fuad was seriously telling me about his

duties as flour rationer for the mountain district, and Nou-had, whom the soldiers called "Aussie," professed his eagerness to come to the States. Uncle George flooded the room with his music, playing a fourteenth-century lute of which he was a master. It was by this playing, reminiscent of Segovia's, and his troubadouring that he had wooed and won my aunt when as a girl of sixteen she had visited Lebanon many years before, leaving her family in the States. And it was the seeking of her whereabouts that had led me to this wonderful land of my heritage.

By prearrangement the racing taxi from Sannin picked me up on the morning of the fifth day. As we descended the treacherous curves I contemplated the wonderful reception I had been given, and became more grateful to the AFS for giving me such a memorable opportunity. I wondered whether I would ever see my aunt. As it turned out, I was to return eight months later, after being wounded, to convalesce.

Upon my return from the mountains, I spent a day with Hage Boutros in Alexandria, called Alex by the troops. This city was much cleaner than Cairo, and had wide boulevards lined with green bushy trees. Facing the Mediterranean shore line, with its fine swimming beaches lined with cabanas, was a solid flank of modern German architecture. Everywhere you found gharris, which furnished a pleasant means of transportation at cheaper rates than taxis. The only semblance of war was the harbor, which was full of ships and where units of the British fleet and Liberty ships were riding at anchor.

Today as I look back and remember my return to Egypt to rejoin my AFS outfit, I know that being an American, and traveling over this Land of Antiquity, enlarged one's personality, corralled new perspectives, awakened new insights, and created a broader sense of tolerance and sympathy. My "small world" meeting with Walter Bernstein I saw as a symbol of new tolerance, so badly needed, between Arab and Jew in the Middle East. It is here that the task of the United Nations is so great, yet seemingly impossible: to free one part of the world from a system of oppressive, feudal tradition, prejudice, and intolerance; so that masses of blameless people are not forced to sell themselves for the simplest needs to avoid starvation.

I longed to get back to the peace and quiet of friends



MAJOR BEN STERN, U.S.M.C.

in the desert; but was it the answer as a human being to turn one's back — or am I my brother's keeper?

It was a cloudy, rainy day when I began to ask my way in search of the gang somewhere out in the blue. No one in AFS Cairo headquarters knew where they were located; the only direction I got was, "Go West, young man."

Hitching a ride in a jeep with a British captain who was in a similar predicament, I threw my bedding roll and portfolio case in the back of his military hot rod alongside his batman and jumped into the front seat. We set out to catch up with the 8th Army during the cool month of December, the best time of the year to travel across the Libyan Desert.

We swung into the desert along the familiar tracks. The battlefield was empty of men and vehicles. Only the slit trenches and mounds of shell cases beside empty gun pits and the surplus of usable but empty petrol tins remained. All food tins and refuse had been buried. As we approached Tel el Aqqaqir, we saw that the battle housework hadn't been done. As far as you could see the ground was strewn with the wrecked remains of the enemy. Tank after tank, gun after gun, and the crossed pieces of wood from ration boxes marked "Unknown German Soldier," hastily buried by the Tommies. Occasionally you came across personal belongings of the dead, a letter from home, a photograph of a family, the prized German cameras and knapsacks containing Egyptian flags. We turned north along the coast road where Jerry had made his final stand against the Aussies, passing the riddled white mosque of Sidi Abd el Rahman where there was a large cemetery of the enemy dead by the roadway. Over a few graves was the swastika, and others bore the black cross of the Kaiser. The crosses above the Italian graves bore rosaries, medals, and the waving black cock feathers of the Bersaglieri helmets.

As our mechanical bronco moved west we became enmeshed in a nose-to-tail convoy, an ideal target for an air attack, but our fighters hedgehopping alongside and skimming the tops of the trucks made a sweet reassuring sound. Sometimes to the north and south the sounds of mopping-up gunfire could be heard where isolated bands of the enemy lingered in the wadis.

The convoy came to a standstill for hours, first because of the breakdown of a couple of vehicles, then because of

the clogging of the road by a procession of Nazi prisoners moving back by foot or jammed in trucks. Columns of wrecked enemy guns and tanks were being carried back, which complicated the other road blocks.

From El Alamein to Daba, which German directional signs designated as being a distance of thirty miles, there had been an orderly retreat, but from Daba on to Fuka, a distance of forty miles, it was a rout; the dead still lay beside the road unburied. The unsung heroes of the campaign, the Royal Engineer sappers, were walking among the dead sounding with detectors and poking the ground with bayonets for mines. We saw one get hit by a jumping-jack mine, and we went over to help. He had gotten it in the groin. His buddies rushed to the scene ahead of us. With sad faces they handled him carefully as though he were a precious child. We knew he was in good hands.

At Fuka we stopped and ate some bully beef right from the can with biscuits. After seeing the wholesale destruction, and not knowing what lay ahead, I again felt the war intensely personally. Rommel was fast on the draw for an attack, but still faster in concealing his guns in retreat. He had raced along this surfaced highway without stopping to fight at any point, controlling the retreat situation with a rear-guard action with surprisingly few losses.

At Halfaya Pass — the soldiers called it Hell Fire Pass — we stopped again bumper to bumper. Sensing something by — call it intuition — the captain who was the driver of the jeep I was in pulled out of the convoy and raced by, squeezing, hugging, and stopping alongside it to allow vehicles to pass. The cause of the stoppage was again a broken-down truck which could have pulled out of the convoy regardless of the mined shoulders. We struggled out of Egypt up the tortuous pass. Looking back and down from the curving pass, we saw the convoy stretching for miles to the east, double parked — and then it happened: a Messerschmidt and Stuka attack on the sitting ducks of the convoy. It was murder and we stood there spellbound, horrified, and helpless. At this crucial moment our planes were nowhere in sight.

We followed the chase, outdistanced by our own units, through an area strip recently cleared of mines. In Tobruk, the town and port were a heap of shattered walls, rubble and booby traps. The bombing that took place here

during the whole war was so great that some said it exceeded that of Malta and Stalingrad. The masts of sunken ships stood out like sore thumbs in the harbor.

As we traveled through hundreds of miles of desert, the spotlight of war shifted from the motorized infantry and fell on the men of the supply corps, the RASC. It was easy to move an army across miles of unobstructed desert waste, but to keep that army well supplied as it moved farther from its base took a miracle of planning. The desert war was a fluid one depending on supplies and the condition of the terrain. There was no static front. The armies of both sides retreated to the nearest supply point and advanced only as rapidly as their supplies could move with them. As soon as the chase started, supply ships left the ports of Alexandria and Port Said and kept pace with the advancing troops; and after a port was taken and occupied, water, gasoline, and food supplies were sent ashore in barges which had been towed along the coast. Some understanding of the supply problem can best be conveyed by the fact that the line of communication increased in ninety days from 720 miles to over 3,000 miles.

Even our own small AFS unit in carrying out its duties rolled 37,000 miles in a sixty-day period. The RASC equipped 196 new men, transported 325 men, purchased and dispatched NAFFI supplies, acquired and forwarded to the operating areas 17 tons of spares and rubber and 23 replacement vehicles, and reconditioned 21 vehicles evacuated from companies. It acquired transport for men repatriated because of ill health or completion of service. Add to this the fact that the RASC had no union, set hours or shifts, but only one aim, to get the stuff there and back, and you have a faint idea of the way approximately 80,000 vehicles were employed.

Water was a vital problem and was as precious as ammunition, for Rommel salted wells as he retreated. We were on minimum rations, a quart every three days, delivered by "Gunga Din," the water man, with his truck. Strange as it seems, you could leave your canteen ration lying around a slit trench all day and no soldier, no matter how thirsty, would touch it. But other items, personal or army issue, were borrowed or scrounged.

Night after night we found shelter, sometimes with a leaguered unit, or in a bedroom of one of the deserted white

Italian houses, or in a U. S. fighter squadron tent, breakfasting with the Yanks before moving on. The Tommy batman had his first taste of American chow with digestible biscuits and almost deserted his captain. I enjoyed my stay with my countrymen. Their curious ideas about the British didn't surprise me, since I had had similar thoughts before I knew them better. I wanted to help them understand the Tommy, but there wasn't enough time.

We hurriedly passed through Benghazi, which seemed sort of deserted except for the hospital and a handful of inhabitants. I was dropped off when I spotted our Dodges along the Mediterranean coast at Tmimi. It had taken me two weeks to find Subsection 10. My hospitalization and convalescence had robbed me of a month's time.

As soon as I saw the "Kids," their griff started to flow like a rippling brook, bringing me up to date on all I had missed. It was really like old times when we sat down to a poker game in the evening in a blacked-out ambulance.

Art Howe had taken command of 15th Company with Snazz Snead as second in command. Geer and the men of the first contingent had either returned, gone to India, or stayed on working with Pan American.

According to their bragging, I had missed a lot of the show, especially the scrounging of the deserted equipment of a fast retreating enemy. They had picked over the stuff which littered the roadside and tracks despite the warning about booby traps. As I looked around in the ambulances, I discovered German Lugers and Mausers and Italian Berettas — although according to our Geneva cards we were definitely noncombatants, and by the Geneva Convention could not transport arms or munitions in our ambulances. All the logic in the world couldn't convince the fellows of the seriousness of the penalty if they were captured with the stuff.

Jake Vollrath, whom I sketched on board ship in our contingent, clothes-happy scrounger that he was, was almost thrown into a POW cage with a group of Italians. The only thing that saved him from imprisonment was that he managed to get out his identification papers in time and do a lot of fast talking. Even Headquarters Company turned up with a Mercedes Benz scrounged by Wayne McMeekan.

The pay-off to this scrounging mania involved the Dead-



SAND STORM

End Kids, particularly Buck Kahlo. During a lull in activities, they all went down to a nearby beach for a swim. Testing out their scrounged equipment, they took pot shots at bushes along the dunes bordering the Mediterranean — and were flabbergasted when nine frightened, bedraggled Italians with arms raised in surrender came over the dunes. Needless to say, they didn't get their swim in the much-

sought-after water, because they had to escort their prisoners to the POW cage.

I found we were now attached to the 14th Light Field Ambulance of the 4th Light Armoured Brigade attached to the 7th Armoured Division which was in the midst of advancing toward the Agheila Line.

The 14th Light Field Ambulance was formed in Sep-



COAST ROAD

tember 1939, and after a few weeks went to France. Up to the start of the war, they ran two hospitals, and then, when active warfare started, they went to Brussels. Then, throughout the retreat, they went from town to town, from village to village, finally landing up in Dunkirk, from which they were evacuated.

They re-formed in England as a light field ambulance unit, and after a period of training left for the Middle East.

Landing in June 1941, they went through the Syrian campaign with the Australians and then ran a hospital in Tripoli for seven months. The unit was sent up to the Western Desert in March 1942, where it had served ever since except for two weeks of refitting in June 1942.

During the Knightsbridge battle, the unit was singled out for a Stuka attack, and 32 men were either killed or wounded.

On October 23, 1942, when the battle of El Alamein began, the unit was in the southern sector treating casualties which occurred during the first night of battle; one of the medical officers became a casualty. After a few days the Field Ambulance moved to the northern sector and on through the Alamein Line with the brigade; one day over a hundred tire punctures were caused by metal "crow's feet" (metal-prong nails) left in a gap in the mine field by the retreating enemy. From now on the unit advanced rapidly with the brigade, sometimes on the roads and sometimes in the desert; most of the casualties were caused by mines on the roads, and these were treated mostly at night when the unit stopped. Benghazi Hospital was taken over and in it were 25 of our own troops who had been POW's; they were glad to see us. A YMCA van arrived a day or so later. We were soon on the move again toward the Agheila Line. In the Agedabia area there were a number of Stuka attacks and strafing; one M.D. lost an arm and a leg and sustained a compound fracture of the other leg and a wireless operator was killed. The unit then took part in the big flanking movement, missing the Agheila battle positions and going to Nofilia where the Field Ambulance found itself unpleasantly near a tank battle as spent solid shells bounced through the leaguer! Christmas Day was spent out in the desert; there was little enemy activity and the cooks managed to produce an excellent dinner of turkey and English pudding. Then they moved on steadily to the concentration area preparatory to the attack on Tripoli; during one move one man was wounded by strafing and on a subsequent move two men were killed, eight wounded, and one lorry burned and then another damaged — all this during the wait before the advance on Tripoli. There was regular strafing and Stuka attacks in the area, mostly on the brigade. One ADS, however, was strafed twice in one day and once the next. During the advance on Tripoli the Field Ambulance moved with the brigade on another flanking movement and had to remain all the time within the armored car protection and could work only at night when the brigade stopped. As soon as we halted the canvas shelters were erected and the operating theater got ready; the patients were treated during the night, given food and evacuated at first light before the unit moved off again with the brigade. One night move of 25 miles was

made over unbelievably bad country. We left the 14th LFA temporarily to join the 22nd Armoured Brigade and rejoined it at Garian after Tripoli fell.

After a period of painting inactivity, I lost no time getting back to my desert reporting routine and the companionship of poker. These activities not only kept me busy during a lull but were an outlet for otherwise "browned off" energies, and prevented me from becoming "desert happy." The continual sight of nothing but sky, sand and far horizons did things to the men. It drew them into themselves, brainwashing them to a point of primitiveness. Day after day the monotonous land built up exaggerations in the minds and mannerisms of the desert veterans. Conversations were broken off suddenly and vacant stares substituted. The same repetitious stories were told, many times by the same men on the same day. These symptoms were not permanent, for a few days' leave was the cure which the MO's prescribed.

As desert dwellers, the AFS men found themselves too far for much communication with headquarters. Life revolved in a reduced orbit: keeping your skin in one piece, trying to get some sleep, cleanliness of daily toilet which was a Montgomery must, and shooting enough oil and grease into the ambulance so that it was always evacuation-worthy. Now and then you came across your canteen for beer and cigarettes or a chance meeting with a fellow worker attached to another outfit. The griff of such meetings always brought forth a humorous bit about AFS men, such as the following encounter of one of our volunteers with a British brigadier.

An unidentified driver returning to his post from an evacuation was stopped by a brigadier after — according to the brigadier — a 60-mile-an-hour chase. The brigadier proceeded to take the driver to task for going at such a speed. When the brigadier had finished, the AFS man replied in a friendly fashion, "Okay, Brig," and started on.

The flabbergasted brigadier continued ahead, where he had a traffic accident necessitating an ambulance. Soon the bawled-out AFS man appeared on the scene. "Hiya, Brig, we meet again —" he greeted the brigadier. What the brigadier replied is unprintable, of course.

Everything had been in readiness for a large-scale offensive when I rejoined the outfit, but infantry patrol re-

ports came back that Rommel had pulled out and was still in flight. Instead of our lot being the contemplated duty from a stable position we were on the move again into the desert. We soon received word that one of our men, Charles Perkins from California who was with the New Zealanders, had been caught in a bag. Ironically, Charlie was captured in the ambulance that was first issued to me

at Tahag. I relinquished it to him when I went to Cairo to compile and ship my paintings.

His capture took place when the Kiwis on an encircling movement out of the desert severed the coast road near Marble Arch. The main body of the Afrika Korps fled on to Sirte, leaving a small rear-guard force that was surrounded. This enemy column sneaked out of the trap at



LORRIES AT SUNSET



LEAGUERED

*Clifford Soboy
Silyan D. Marble Arch*

night, taking Charlie, his patients, and his ambulance along with them. We had hope of retaking him and others in Tripoli but he had disappeared by then.

When Charlie was repatriated, his tale was one of the high spots of AFS humor. He had been taken to Italy in a submarine to a POW camp. One night nature called him from his bunk and he innocently walked out of his tent, only to be accosted by a sentry. The latter, convinced Charlie was trying to escape, prodded him in the leg with his bayonet and his rifle got stuck in it. Charlie had a wooden leg.

Evacuating a few whose wounds had been caused by mines and rear-action fighting, we pushed into the desert to a captured German airfield near Marble Arch where a steady stream of transport planes landed with supplies for the 8th Army and took back its wounded. Most of the planes bore the American star insignia. It was here, as a spare driver with Hazy, that I saw General Montgomery in person — and what I would have given to do his portrait!

Our course from Marble Arch was almost due west, taking us deeper into the part of the North African desert which had not been fought over and which showed no wreckage scars of previous battles. We moved night and day but we carried few patients. Christmas came in the midst of all this and we remained in one spot while our canteen caught up with us. For Christmas presents we all received leather wallets. We looked at each other with expressions which conveyed, "Where the hell are we going to use these?"

German reconnaissance planes spotted us in the chase and when we got beyond our own fighter patrols they became aggressive and let us have it. Night after night we would hear the BBC's statement that we had air superiority. Right in the midst of the broadcast we would scramble out of the tent to the drone of an overhead enemy fighter, the area lighted by his dropped flares and the crunching of bombs near by. Someone would remark loudly, "Superiority, hell!"

The chase through the maze of booby traps, mines, and the enemy's countershelling with 88 mm's was so swift that I had no opportunity to sit and paint, so I resorted to painting on the move. My idea was to do color notes from which I could later do more detailed paintings in oils and

water colors. With Hazy at the wheel, I held the sketch book in my lap, its pages held down by a rubber band, and worked Chinese fashion, painting and drawing at the same time with a brush. My U. S. canteen cup, holding an inch of rationed water, was in front of me, attached by its handle to the closed glove compartment door. It was a screwy setup in Hazy's eyes but it worked for me. I did try later to execute larger paintings from the sketches but gave up the attempt; I had captured the scenes in my sketches in the space of a few minutes, whereas I would labor hours to duplicate a sketch and only managed to produce a detailed but static result.

As we traveled, the desert was smooth and gravelly with occasional sagebrush. We crossed a mine field without incident and then came across a wadi wherein the gravel turned to pebbles, then to rocks, and then to boulders. Zigzagging over this boulder-strewn plain, we turned north over one low hill after another and vegetation began to thicken with miles of greenery including millions of flowers of every description. The air blowing into our car windows was heavy with their sweet aroma.

Wee Wee turned his ambulance over to me so that he could join the 11th Hussars. A competitive race to Tripoli among our own group began. Junior moved in with me as spare driver; he had recently been pinned down in a pocket by German artillery, an ordeal which had wounded him without leaving a physical mark. The thought of an artillery shell whining overhead and the worry as to where it would land was far worse than undergoing an aerial bombing. The impression of the experience and one's reactions to it could become so intense and deeply imbedded that they could be almost as damaging in effect as a direct hit. In the first war they called the victim "shell shocked," in this one "bomb happy." However, today the problem is solved by catching these cases in time and sending them back for a rest. Junior's fear of bombs was so intense that he slept in a slit trench even when it wasn't necessary, and the slightest noise of a motor put the fear of God into him. He was shortly sent to Syria for a rest cure which was completely successful. After that he returned to the desert and finished the campaign.

Rommel steadily retreated to Tripoli, giving the Highland Division bitter resistance at Homs.



PLANES AT SUNSET

Maintenance At 11th AFS (American Coy)

Tmimi, Libyan Desert 12/15/42

On the shores of the Mediterranean - mosquito-infested rocky terrain.

The 11th AFS Coy is one of two ambulance coys attached to the 8th Army. Here they have stopped for maintenance and repairs. Each volunteer American driver maintains his vehicle daily; once a month the vehicle is given a thorough overhauling and a 406 inspection by a British workshops section which is attached to the coy. The advance of the 8th Army, the rapidity of it, the terrain crossed, has made maintenance almost as frequent and necessary as eating.

In the painting, American Dodge and British Austin ambulances are being checked by workshops personnel. Two wrecked German vehicles are at the right center, and in the foreground an American driver in dungarees is taking petrol from a captured "Jerry can" (the 8th Army name for these containers). These cans made for water and petrol. The water cans have "Wasser" and the petrol cans "Feuer Gefährliche" stamped on their sides. Every 8th Army vehicle carries two or three of them and they are preferred to those officially issued. They are absolutely watertight with a patent lever action cap.

In the foreground, the door window has been smeared with oil and sand to prevent the reflection of the sun's rays from attracting enemy aircraft.

11th Airborne Field Service Maintenance at
Tunisi - Western Desert 12/15/42
H/10 J. J. J. J.



Tommyes Warming Up — Tmimi, Libyan Desert 12/16/42

Wintertime in the desert is just as cold as it is back home. This is a typical scene of Tommyes sitting around a fire, warming themselves after brewing some tea. The most popular method of making a fire is to take half a petrol tin, fill it with sand, add some petrol, and ignite it. With occasional stirring, such a fire will burn fiercely for over an hour before more petrol is needed. As the supply lines have grown longer and longer, petrol fires have come to be considered an offense; petrol is vital for modern warfare, and it is becoming increasingly hard to get.

In this 25-minute sketch the Tommyes have built their fire from brush wood, dead bushes, camel scrub, and old bits of paper.

Their pup-tent, which is called a "bivvy," is pitched over a square hole about three feet deep, dug in the sand and lined with used petrol tins, which prevents the sides from caving in. Outside "Jerry cans" are piled up to form seats. Every morning the blankets, soaked with dew, are spread on the outside of the "bivvy" to catch the first rays of the sun. And as soon as the sun rises over the horizon, a fire is lit, but not before.

Laundry, earlier in the campaign done in petrol but now in almost precious water, is hung on a makeshift rope line to dry. But however scarce the water may be, the Tommy manages with the skill of practice to bathe himself completely in one mess tin of water.



Clifford Faber
Timimi - Libyan Desert
"Tommy's warming up"
12/19/42

Sleeping Inside Ambulance

12/21/42

Four miles west of Marble Arch, Libyan Desert
(interior of an American ambulance - equipment of driver.
So cold one sleeps under five blankets fully clothed).



As the American Dodge ambulances are not designed to carry the kit of the driver or orderly, each man has to pack his equipment so as not to interfere with the patients. Most of the driver's and orderly's belongings are neatly and tightly packed together behind the front seats of the car, allowing the rest of the vehicle for the patients. Four lying cases or seven to nine sitting are easily carried in these Dodges. Rations are usually carried in a built-in tool chest. Six gallons of water and six of petrol are kept in racks on the side of the vehicle. Usually the smart driver will scrounge a Jerry water can which is kept between the front seats. There is one in the sketch. In the painting is Hazen Hinman, of Rome N.Y., with whom I share this ambulance. Behind him is his equipment, his haversack, a captured green German candle lamp, and his tin hat resting on my painting kit.

Sleeping Inside Ambulance
Clifford Seber
12/21/64



Distant Bombing
Libyan Desert 12/20/42

This water color was done in a blacked-out ambulance after the scene was experienced. The occupants of this bivvy trench are American Field Service drivers of Subsection 10, alias the "Dead-End Kids" in the 15th AFS Company. Their ambulances are dispersed 200 yards apart from each other. The sky is absolutely free of clouds; the moon is full and almost overhead. To the left are parachute flares dropped by the Jerry bomber to pick out in detail the airport two or three miles away which he was attacking. On the horizon is the cloud of smoke and sand from the bomb explosions. In the sky are the many-colored ack-ack tracers feeling out the plane.



Clifford Jaber
1941/42
Libyan Desert
Distant Bombing

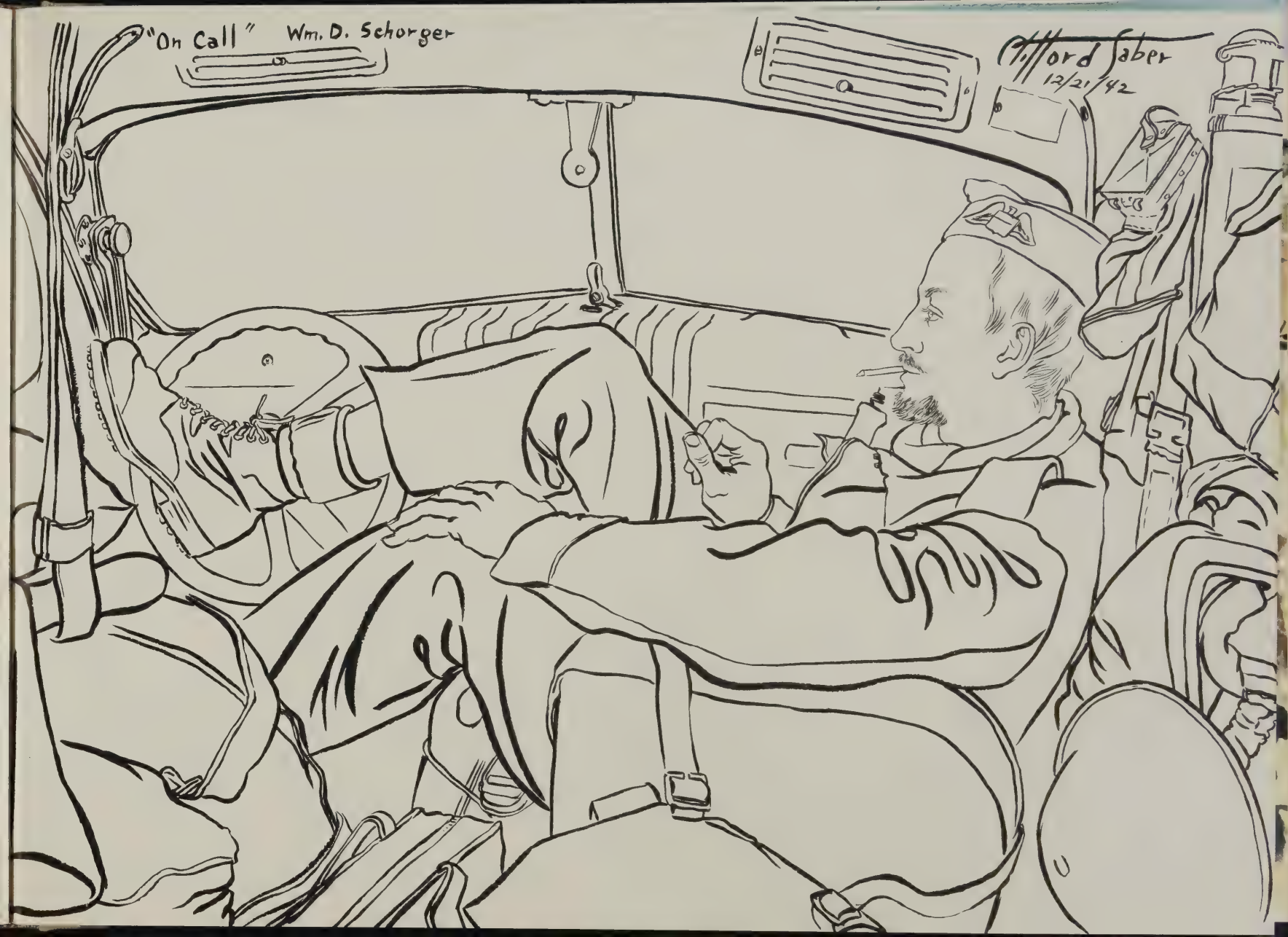
"On Call" - Volunteer William D. Schorger
12/21/42

Volunteer Schorger (nicknamed "Wee Wee") from Madison Wisconsin, of the American Field Service, reached Egypt at the beginning of September 1942. After brief preliminary training at Tahaq, he was sent with his unit up into the desert near Alexandria. He has been in active service during the entirety of Montgomery's push, working with the advancing medical units from Agheila onward. On detachment with the 11th Royal Hussars from Sirta to Tripoli, he was the first American to enter the captured capital, and was among the first Allies to do so. During February he participated in the scouting column of KRR's (King's Royal Rifles) that penetrated sixty miles behind German lines and scouted the southern end of the Mareth Line. The Van Dyck beard traveled from Barce to a little beyond Tripoli, only to be eradicated suddenly by an order from Cairo.

"On Call" Wm. D. Schorger



Clifford Faber
12/21/42



"Christmas Morn" — Libyan Desert 12/25/42

This is a typical desert bedroom. The bed consists of an oblong hole varying in length according to the size of the man and in depth to protect himself from flying shrapnel. The regulation slit trench is as deep as possible and as narrow as possible to foil the ground-strafting planes. As the ground here had a rock floor two feet below the surface, the dirt was piled around the sides of the trench to give it depth. In the foreground is the comic section of an American newspaper which was received in a Christmas package. The American occupant is wrapped in a blanket and has his tin helmet near his head ready for use. In the left foreground are the remains of an opened can of fruit and a Jerry knife-fork-spoon combination picked up along the line. Scattered around the trench are one Jerry and two British water cans. In the distance are other vehicles well dispersed.

"Christmas Morn" - Lilyan Parent
Clifford Feber
12/25/92



BROWNE OFF



Bridge in Blacked out T.S. A.F.S. H.Q. Lorry.
Art Fiero, Lt. Seward, Jack Leland, & Capt. Art Howe.
Clifford Fieber 1/19/42
Lilypum Dream.

BRIDGE



"NEW YEAR'S EVE IN BLACKED-OUT AMBULANCE"

14 Light Field Ambulance — "R.A.S.C. Workshops"
Libyan Desert 12/28/42

"Workshops" is a familiar word to all for even at home we putter around the tool shed with a screw driver and a hammer; some are even lucky enough to own a lathe. To the fellows out here in the desert, "Workshops" or "Tiggy's" as it is commonly known, has an entirely different aspect, for they are the boys who get us through. The 8th Army is highly mechanized. As a matter of fact, every man in it has a seat or a place in a vehicle. The desert is extremely rough. These two items lead to one conclusion — breakdown. These occur many times a day in a desert army, and it is the job of "Workshops" to rectify the faults such as flat tires, broken springs, petrol stoppages, electrical troubles; big woes and little woes and countless other woes too numerous to mention.



Clifford J. Fisher
14th Light Field Ambulance RASC Workshops
Libyan Desert 12/28/42

Armoured Car F6/485
"Relaxation"
12/29/42

Headquarters car, B Squadron 11th Royal Hussars, is the command car of one of the three patrol squadrons of the first mechanized cavalry unit to fight in the Western Desert. This unit participated in the opening stages of the war, was in Wavell's march against the Italians, and has had an unequalled record of service ever since. In early 1943 it was awarded the "Triple Crown" for being the first unit to enter Tobruk, Benghazi and Tripoli, and later the first into Tunis. It is solely an armored car outfit, and its cars do scouting, forward patrols and artillery observing. At the time of portrayal, they were using Humber cars, well armored and mounting one heavy and one light caliber machine gun. The crew consists of three men: the gunner, the wireless operator, and the driver. Operating in patrols or singly, such vehicles have proved invaluable in desert warfare.

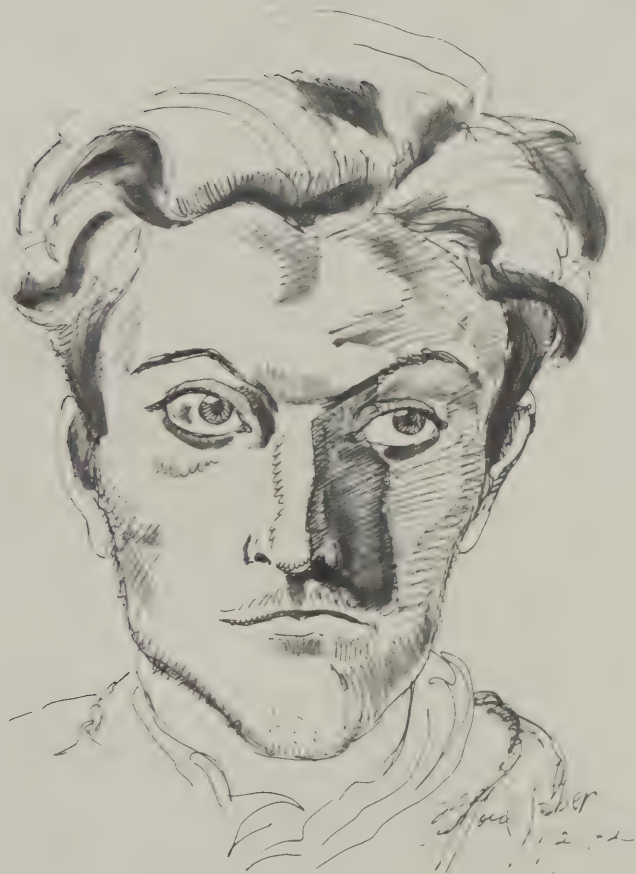
Called "Cherry Pickers" because of their distinctive red and brown berets, the 11th Hussars have a reputation well earned through the demands and dangers of their type of work.

Armoured Car F.M. 145
"Relaxation"

H. J. J. J. J.
4/29/42



POW GERMAN



POW German With Broken Leg
British Evacuation Tent - 168th LFA
Libyan Desert 1/2/43

Corporal Mielang, Duntzer - German Luftwaffe-pilot - twenty years old - from Bromberg, Germany. He spent two and half years in the Luftwaffe and was in the Russian campaign. In the German air force, all ranks were pilots. After ten days in the Libyan campaign, he was shot down by a Britisher flying a Kitty Hawk on December 31, 1942.

A week or so after I completed this sketch, a British colonel watching me paint in the field asked to look at the book. When he came across this picture, he went into a dignified but vehement tirade. He informed me that this chap was the one he had witnessed shot down after strafing a red-cross-marked main dressing station. His verification was that he had interrogated the downed POW when this Jerry was brought before him.

Although the colonel enjoyed and complimented me on the painting, his personal remarks concerning this POW left me ready to remove the picture from the book - but reporting and art can't be personal - so here it is.



P.O.W. German with broken leg
Corporal Mielenz, Weather-Flutwaffen
Clifford Sabers 1/2/43
British Evacuation tent - 168 Light Field Ambulance, Libyan Desert



WADI ZEM ZEM

Wadi Zem Zem
Mobile Painting

CIRCLING PLANES



Mobile Painting

TWO MILES FROM HOMS



ON THE WAY TO HOMS

131 MDS — British Evacuation

1/4/43

This is a main dressing station in the forward area. A British ambulance has just pulled up to the reception tent and two stretcher-bearers are carrying in a wounded man. A little to the right is a truck with a tarpaulin attachment pinned to the ground, which serves as a ward. Beneath the Red Cross flag can be seen another tent fixed as a latrine and beyond it is the operating tent with a staff car outside it.

In the foreground a machine gun sight taken off an ME 109 is affixed as a mascot on the radiator of the Dodge ambulance in which the painting was done.

1st Lt. G.S. - Dublin
H. J. Jaber
1/1/1918



Asleep And A Jeep
1/6/43

This is a scene outside an AFS field headquarters. The AFS Adjutant, Lieutenant Charles Sneed, is taking a siesta on his bed roll after taking a bath. His toilet equipment, water bucket, etc., are laid on the radiator of the jeep; a New York YMCA towel is draped over the windshield. A bulls-eye air-recognition sign is painted on the tarpaulin cover of the jeep. In the right background is the mobile AFS HQ office which acts as a central sorting office for mail in addition to its regular administrative functions. The jeep is used to maintain communications between HQ and outlying AFS units.



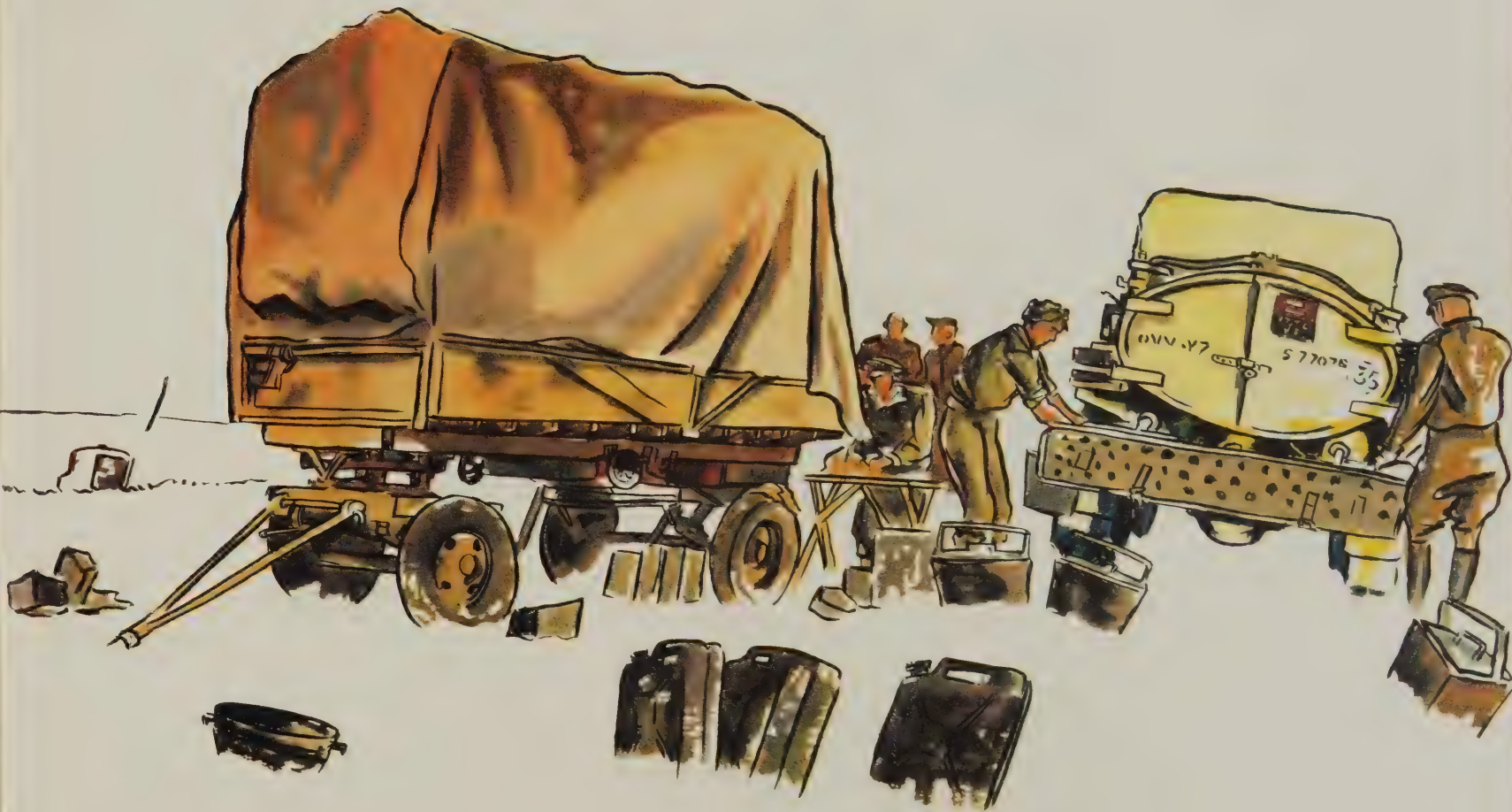
sleep and a jeep
P. H. Fisher
Libyan Desert 1/4/43

AFS Cooks Drawing Water
1/8/43

As vital as ammunition, food and petrol to the 8th Army is water. From the breakthrough at Elamein until the capture of Tripoli, water has definitely been the most sought-after and precious commodity. To each unit is attached one or more trucks which daily visit the water points put into operation and maintained by the Royal Engineers. On the heels of the army travel these men who have usually found the wells mined, blown up, contaminated, or filled with salt. In a matter of hours they are able to get the wells in operation, the water tested, and the empty trucks filled. Usually each man draws a canteen a day to provide for all his needs. In the long waterless stretch from Agheila to Homs this ration often had to be cut in half. The Royal at times was forced to land thousands of gallons to help the army on its way. The water was usually very brackish and often so salty that milk curdled in the tea, but occasionally it seemed to be excellent spring water.

In this sketch, the desert yellow truck with sand channels on the back has just returned from a water point to the AFS H.Q. cookhouse, a scrounged Jerry trailer, where it has been anxiously awaited by our cooks, who draw a gallon per man, sometimes less, making dishwashing nonexistent.

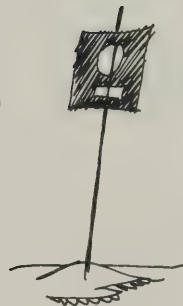
15th AF5 Cooks drawing water
Tripolitanian Desert
Cliff and Saben 1/8/43





CONVOY IN TRIPOLITANIA DESERT

Chapter 3



ON TO TRIPOLI

*The leading units of the Eighth Army are now about 200 miles from Tripoli.
...THE EIGHTH ARMY IS GOING TO TRIPOLI.*

*Tripoli is the only town in the Italian Empire overseas still remaining
in their possession. Therefore we will take it from them ...ON TO TRIPOLI!*

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S dispatch to the troops,
12 January, 1943

22nd Armoured Brigade Tank Crew
"Brewing Up" Tripolitanian Desert
1/13/43

One of the worst features of desert warfare, and particularly of tank fighting in the desert, is thirst. The temperature inside a tank is any thing up to 130 °F., and while the tank is in motion, a thick stream of sand pours into the driver's vision flap and fills the air inside.

A fairly liberal supply of water is carried inside each tank. And whenever possible a brew of tea, such as the one in this painting, is made. The most popular catch phrase in the 8th Army is, as a matter of fact, "When in doubt, brew up."

Brewing up is a fine art under active service conditions. Speed is a keynote, as the signal to advance may be given at any moment.

Each man has his own job; one gets the half petrol tin that serves as a fire and fills it with sand; one brings the petrol and pours it in; while another brings the brew can - again a half petrol tin - and fills it with water. Meanwhile, the rest of the crew are wiping sand out of the mugs and getting tea, sugar, and milk from the ration locker.

The brew can serves also as a teapot. When the water is boiling, in about 4 minutes, a handful of tea is thrown in and the can is removed from the fire with the aid of a beret used like a glove.

Armored Brigade
"Tank crew brewing up"
Clifford Faber
1/12/43
Tripoli, Tunisia Desert





EARLY MORN WADI ZEM ZEM

WE RACED to Tripoli — the symbol of all Libya — with the 22nd Armoured Brigade, commanded by General Montgomery. Our objective was to take it in ten days after starting operations. As the center axis of two flanking thrusts, the 51st Highland Division along the coast and on our left the 7th Armoured and 2nd New Zealand Divisions, we traveled across the wadis like participants in the Oklahoma land rush. We were fired with the enthusiasm of the coming battle and a race to see who would enter the city first.

And as we moved we saw the end of Mussolini's dream of colonization on a large scale in Libya. Of its two provinces, the eastern, Cyrenaica, contained the main towns of Bardia, Tobruck, Derna, and Benghazi and the western, Tripolitania, the towns of Sirte, Buerat, Misurata, Homs, and Tripoli. Ten years before Il Duce had sent out land-hungry Italian farmers, builders, and families. Their little white villages with small yards were built alike. Two box-type plaster houses with a connecting roman arch bore identification numbers and the words "*Ente Collinazione Libia*." Boldly scrawled on the outside walls by the retreating enemy were such bombastic slogans as "*Vive Il Duce!* Believe, Obey, Fight," or the black swastika.

By strip-cropping, the Italians had cultivated the fields and planted orchards. Rows of young cypress and alder trees lined the road and the short driveways that led to the farmhouses. They had worked hard, prospered, and gained wealth which they never could have acquired in their homeland. The maintenance of a secure future depended on peace, but the silent houses testified that Mussolini had denied them that by war. He had robbed them of their homes, taken their savings for taxes, and conscripted their reluctant sons, who were handier at gardening than at fighting, into the army.

Historically this fertile belt along the Mediterranean coast line was once the granary and vineyard of Caesar's Rome. The Greeks colonized it and built the five cities of Pentapolis. The Vandals, Goths, and Moslems overran the Greek and Roman centers and the Sahara added its sands. Ruins were still in evidence. Amphitheaters, statues, and mosaic murals in temples are hidden in the rising rock-strewn plateau covered by camel thorn and gnawed by wadis. Many a soldier explored this, and those with an esthetic streak scrounged a memento or two.

In 1911 the Italians chased the Turks from Libya, and after World War I the tyrannical Marshal Rodolfo Graziani slaughtered the Senusi Bedouin tribes by the tens of thousands in Italy's "pacification" of Libya, then ruled it with an iron hand.

I got to know the Senusi Bedouins quite well. My Arabic did wonders for me, not only in my bartering with them, getting information as to the location of the enemy and when he had last been in the place we had just reached, but in building up good will for the Allies and straightening out disputes which arose with the natives. I found from Syria to Tunisia that the language varies slightly in pronunciation and word usage. In Lebanon and Syria, Arabic is spoken with a soft *g* sound while in Egypt the *g* is hard and guttural. Moving westward into the desert, the *g* is still hard but gradually gets softer. The Arabs were baffled by my accent and asked, "Are you from Egypt, Syria, Iraq?" When I told them America, they just wouldn't believe me. They insisted that I came from whatever place they named. In towns I was besieged by Jews mistaking me for a Palestinian. In this foreign intrigue, it was indeed a privilege to be just an average American.

All along the line I met Arabs who would ask, "Have you seen my brother [or some other relative]? He was forced into the Italian army by bayonet point." Or, "He went to Benghazi with the Jerries, and when the British came escaped or joined up with them." These were the Senusi people. I had seen a few such soldiers along the line but didn't know whether they were prisoners or Allies. I soon learned that those poor Arabs who refused to fight for the Italians were shot, hanged, or bayoneted. Occasionally I heard of a few who dribbled back to their villages or camp after we had occupied Italian territory. Those with whom I spoke had hated the Axis. Their food had been bad and they had been put in front on many of the assaults. I was surprised to learn that 123,000 were forced into the army by sheiks who were in Italian pay. The families they had left behind were starving. Whatever good livestock or crops they had were taken by the Ities and Jerries. Their food rations were nil. They actually were existing on dates and what few eggs the chickens laid; as they said, "If the hens have something to eat, we have eggs." They had no tea, sugar, or flour. Meat was found only in villages where they had managed to hide their stock of goats and sheep when the Axis troops retreated.

Unlike the enemy, which took what it wanted, the British bartered for eggs and lamb with tea, sugar, or biscuits. A handful of tea brought from three to ten eggs; a liter or more of tea, a baby lamb. With tea or sugar you could get anything. One pack of hardtack biscuits brought two eggs, but the Tommies had spoiled their trade by accepting one egg for one biscuit. Of course, the Long Range Desert Group was far ahead of the army and had to scrounge for its food; when they had ample supplies, they bartered.

While attached to the 22nd Armoured Brigade, we stopped at an oasis village not far from Homs. It was a beautiful spot, quite like descriptions in the Bible. Our water supply was low, and the important thing was to find out if the wells here were sweet and not salted. I tried to purchase several lambs and eggs for the unit. Sheep were running all over the village but the meat was too tough. Baby lambs were not to be found. Eggs were plentiful. Tom Smith and I took a five-gallon Jerry tin and accompanied one Hassan Ibn Muflih Chinarr who told me the

water was good and sweet. Tom and I didn't care if it was poisonous; we just wanted enough of the liquid to take a good bath. I hadn't had one in over a month.

The well was situated in an orchard of date palms. It was the typical well of Biblical days. There was a goatskin bucket and a long trench runway. You dropped the bucket into the well until it was filled with water, and then raced down the runway trench pulling on the rope to bring up the filled goatskin. Just to stand near the well and try to pull the rope hand over hand was a tiring and strenuous job. Running down the trench was easier but also tiring as the length of the rope was a good hundred feet. At some other wells, cattle were used for drawing up the water. Hassan and another fellow from the village filled

our tins and carried them back to our vehicles, three hundred yards away. They just wouldn't let us do the work. Later the water was tested and found to be good and sweet but we added a small amount of chlorine, for one doesn't take chances with typhoid.

I got to know Hassan quite well during our few days' stay near his village. He gave me all the information I desired. The Jerries had been at the oasis the morning of the day we arrived. The Arabs existed on nothing but dates, which he graciously gave us and made sure they were clean. One never saw Moslem women here. He went on to tell me that they actually buried their women in the ground for fear of the soldiers. I asked him about native food specialties and he beamed when he described those they had



TRIPOLITANIA DESERT



ARABS IN WADI EL KEBERE

had before the war, but now *mafeesh-she* (nothing).

Whenever they had complaints, they would run to me, hoping I could straighten them out with the officers. For instance, after the water had been pronounced safe the Tommies started to drive to the well over some newly plowed fields of lima beans and onions. Of course, they meant well and tried to stay on one track leading into the oasis but usually would miss and turn the cars around in the plowed area. As their crop was the Arabs' livelihood, I took their complaint to the colonel. He immediately posted a sign stating that since we had made a track into the village we would remain on it when going for water or be disciplined accordingly.

I liked the Senusi people and extravagantly gave them my only pound of tea for a dozen eggs. My generosity brought results. I was given dates, peppers, a little olive

oil, and Hassan brought me some sort of meat loaf cooked in red pepper sauce. I did not want to offend him and accepted it, but I didn't like it at all. Smithy did, however, and ate most of it himself, except for a few slices I mixed with M & V. Not being acclimated to the food, one has to be careful not to come down with Gypo-tummy. Smithy didn't care, and received no ill effects except a blistered tongue from the hot sauce.

It was here that I met Fatah, a strong good-looking boy of ten with big brown eyes. I did two paintings of him, one with his smaller brother, Mansoor, who had an older person's facial features but lacked the vivacious personality that Fatah generated all over the camp. Mansoor had a way of tucking his arms into his tunic, and at first I had the impression that he was armless. It wasn't until I offered them both biscuits that the hidden hands and arms emerged

to accept the food.

Fatah and I got to be pals. He followed me around like a shadow. He helped me wash and clean my mess tins in the sand. He took a delight in my shaving. When it came time to brush my teeth I offered him some of the toothpaste to clean his teeth which were quite stained; he tried it and at first couldn't stand the peculiar hot feeling of the soap and spit it out. He then became bolder and asked me for some more which I squeezed out for him. He aped my brush strokes with his forefinger. Although tears were in his eyes, the broadest smile was on his face. Tom Smith and "Boo Boo" Reynolds, who shared an ambulance together, and I were in stitches over his antics. Boo Boo was so taken by Fatah that he wrote a wonderful letter about him to his little niece back in Hartford in which I did a small pen drawing of Fatah.

One windless sunny day while I was sketching from the back of the ambulance, Fatah and Smith were pitching stones. At Fatah's suggestion they set up a can target at least a hundred feet away. Fatah had a wonderful marksman's eye and knocked the can several times, whereas Smithy, who was a husky, healthy fellow of twenty-one, couldn't even touch it. Smithy remarked that Fatah had a wonderful swing and would make an expert ball player. Boo Boo and I watched the stone pitching with delight. Then Smithy started tossing stones directly overhead to see how high he could throw. Fatah followed suit and threw them just as high and sometimes higher. He started a barrage by throwing five or six stones to Smithy's one, straight up into the air, so that they fell right on top of the two of them. Tom couldn't stand this ack-ack fire so he ran to the ambulance and put his steel helmet on and returned to challenge Fatah. It was hilarious to watch the competition. Smithy threw his arm out while Fatah kept on going strong.

Although Fatah didn't speak English, he understood we liked him. I spoke Arabic with him and before we left I instilled a few English words in him which I hoped would be of value. He had a way of saying "No" that became contagious and we began doing it ourselves. He would smile, his eyes would sparkle, and he'd click his tongue against his teeth with a tsk-tsk sound and his head would nod slightly from side to side.



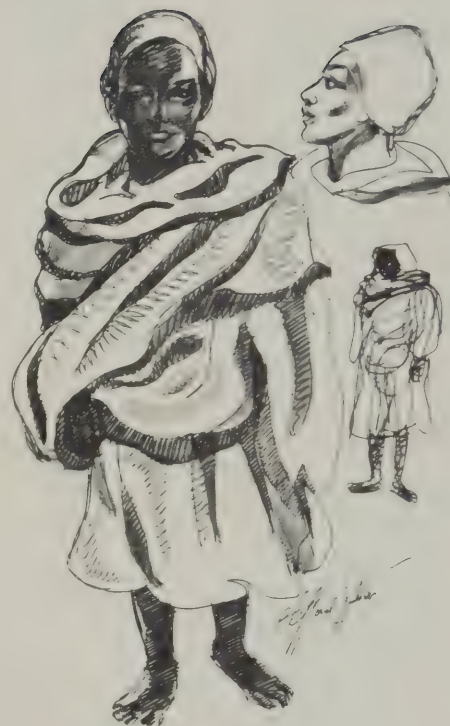
Early one morning, it must have been 2 A.M., I was awakened by Junior Bachman who slept in a furrow between two small dunes while I slept inside the ambulance. He said there was someone to see me. It was Hassan and two Gordon Highlanders. A battalion of them had moved into the oasis in the early morning and had leaguered on the northern side of the well across from us. They were competing with our brigade and division to be first into Tripoli. Hassan immediately broke out in a scared voice, saying that these two soldiers were scrounging and would have taken his chickens if he hadn't pleaded with them to accompany him to see me and that I would straighten the situation out. He was nervous and frightened and couldn't believe the British were similar to the Italians in flashing knives for what they wanted. He promised that if these two soldiers would wait until morning he would give them all the eggs they desired free.

I was in a hell of a spot, for I had to appease them both, especially these Scots, infantry men of the group better known as the "Ladies from Hell." They were out to get what they wanted since they were front-line troops. I explained to Hassan the conditions of these troops whose

food was rationed and who had to scrounge for what they could get; how they had been taken prisoners and the treatment they received; the selfishness of other Arabs who had stolen and cheated them; and finally their doubt about whether they would be alive the next day. They lived for the moment! He understood but said his people had been so frightened that they had not slept, and had rucked the women and children under the floors of their huts. They liked the English, they wanted to help them, but begged them to leave their livestock for that was all they had left. I informed him that this was another unit which was camped north of us on the other side of the village and that they didn't know the Senusi as we had learned to know them, and these other units compared them with Arabs who had taken advantage of them. I assured him that they meant no harm and would do no harm. Hassan felt better, thanked God for my little help, said good night and departed. I then explained to the two Highlanders the Arabs' lament, how they were hospitable and different from other wogs, how this sheik would be glad to give them all the eggs they needed and how the Senusi were existing on dates. The Highlanders informed me that they had meant no harm but were hungry after being on rations of just a tin of bully beef a day and no tea for weeks. Junior was now fully awake, and I suggested a brew-up and he seconded the motion.

We invited the Highlanders into the ambulance and blacked it out. They were a Mutt and Jeff combination and just as funny. We could understand the brogue of the tall one, called Jock, but the other, Chaur, had us baffled most of the time.

Their tams leaned rakishly over their sandy-red freckled Scottish faces, and their bruised stubby knees showed the wear of the terrain. To them all other soldiers were secondary. This was a war between them and Jerry. They were self-righteous individuals and without a doubt among the fiercest and most valiant fighters, especially with cold steel. As we talked, I kept remembering the spine-tingling wail of the bagpipes which played every sundown in the desert, as well as the chilling battle marches with accompanying drums when the Highland Division charged with bayonets and were practically wiped out. Jock and Chaur were browned off, for they had subsisted on short rations of



nothing but cold bully beef and hardtack biscuits for three weeks, so they had finally come to the point of scrounging food. We remedied that on short order. We had a banquet!

Junior went over to Al Bowron's and Spike Himmel's car and borrowed their primus and we cooked M & V, brewed tea, and had a tin of Dole's pineapple slices. We swapped stories over our early-morning meal. We discovered Chaur had been captured and escaped, and Jock was a machine gunner. The snack broke up at four-thirty in the morning.

Fatah And Mansoor Abu Fayid

1/20/43

It is always a great mystery in the 8th Army where the natives come from, where they are going, and how they manage to survive in the barren wastes. It seems that as soon as a convoy pauses, no matter what part of the desert it is traveling through it will be seized by several wogs (wog-wily old or oriental gentleman) carrying eggs of questionable age and producing squawking chickens from the folds of their cloaks which remind one of a magician and his concealed manager. These they are only too eager to barter for precious chai (tea) which is an obsession with them. The main roads are always lined with natives of all sizes and description, always garbed in worn "Itie" boots, shirts, and some moth-eaten blanket. In the most violent sandstorms they amble up to the cars, begging cigarettes and trading eggs. It is surprising how many of their colorful phrases have been incorporated into the already picturesque speech of the 8th Army - for instance, *maaleyph* ("it doesn't matter") and *bardine* ("not now, some other time"). These two brothers are typical of the Tripolitanian Arab, honest, hospitable and friendly. During our brief stay at their oasis we adopted this pair as our mascots. The older of the two, Fatah, nine years old, was offered to me by the head of the village as a personal servant. This of course, I had to decline.



Fatah + Mansoor

Clifford Faber
1/26/93

Repairs Two Miles From Homs By The Sea

1/22/43

Tripolitania

At the time of this painting the AFS Subsection No 10 was attached to the 22nd Armored Brigade (General Montgomery's pet outfit) which was racing to be the first into Tripoli but unfortunately was nosed out by the 11th Hussars. Here along the shores of the Mediterranean they have stopped to repair vehicles that have come all the way from Alamein. The country here is characteristic of the coastal belt from Homs to Tripoli and affords a welcome relief from the glaring monotony of the desert. Despite the cold weather, we found that the chance to bathe and swim in the sea was too good an opportunity to by pass. Every minute that could be scrounged from the main job was spent on the sands or in the water. The mosque-like building in the background is the tomb of a Sheikh.

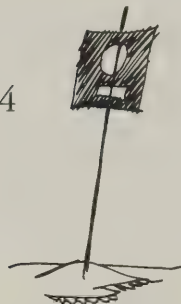


Trip from Homs - Trip to sea
Clifford Sobel 1/22/53
Trip to Homs



"TANK IN TRIPOLITANIA DESERT"

Chapter 4

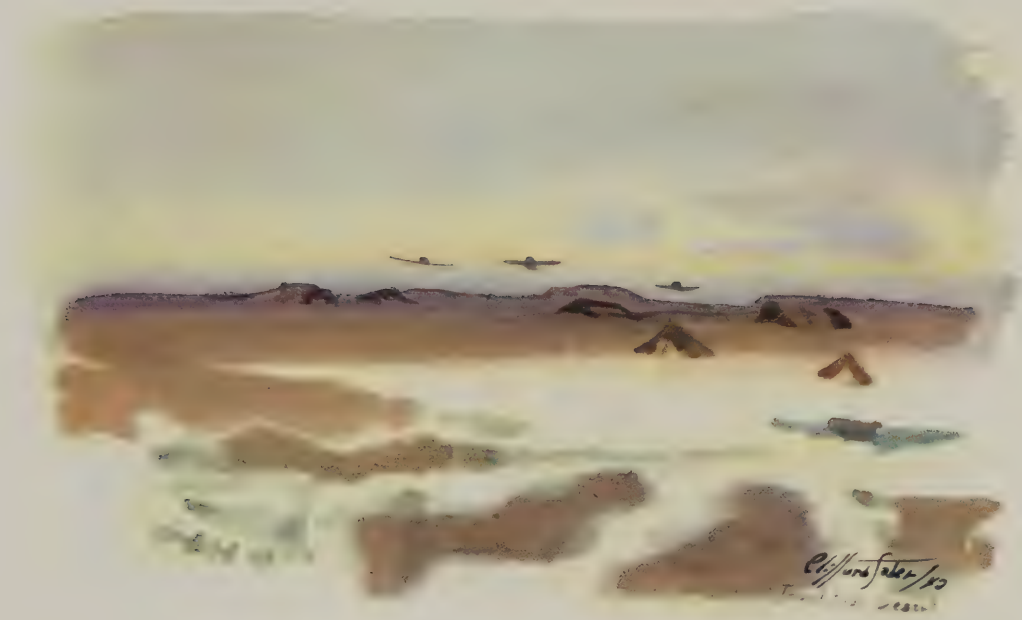


TRIPOLI CAPTURED

Today 23 January exactly three months after we began the Battle of Egypt the Eighth Army has captured Tripoli....The achievement is probably without parallel in history....I congratulate the whole army. It could not have been done unless every soldier had pulled his full weight all the time. I congratulate the whole Army and send my personal thanks to each of you for the wonderful support you have given me....

...There is much work still in front of us. But I know you are ready for any task that you may be called upon to carry out....

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S dispatch to the troops,
23 January, 1943



"PLANES — TRIPOLITIAN DESERT"

ON THE twenty-third of January, we of the 7th Armoured Division lost the race to Tripoli by a few hours to the armored cars of the Cherry Pickers, the 11th Hussars, who were closely followed by a battalion of Gordon Highlanders. Junior and I wondered whether Wee Wee, Jock, and Chaur had got in on the much-talked-of occasion.

The capital of the last of Mussolini's remaining colonies had fallen and Rommel was still retreating to the Tunisian border with the Desert Rats on his tail. The task of these men was not yet done. Desert victory was merely a steppingstone toward heralded African battles yet to be fought.

The Kids raced against each other toward the city, but the real race was for the wine and food to be procured there. We almost lost each other driving in the deception of the moonlight. Its magic erased the dirt and shrapnel scars of war from the desert villages — it was like driving through suburbs at home; but with daylight we were brought back to the reality of where we were. On the coast road everybody seemed to be going to a fire. As we moved we sang the Marine Hymn.

We camped on the outskirts of the city before being allowed to visit the capital. And who should strut in but Wee Wee with his tale of the fall, elated at having been the first American into Tripoli.

He related how at 4:30 on a cold morning, three months to the day after the 8th Army attack on El Alamein, its units approached in silence the city of Tripoli. It had been a bitter 1400 miles, but now the kilo post read "Tripoli 23." The civilian population was asleep or too scared to venture out into the streets. Ahead of the ambulances were a half dozen armored cars. They entered the Piazza Italia unopposed and turned into the Piazza Castello. The city seemed deserted except for the new occupants who had a brew-up along the palm-lined waterfront. The harbor was full of sunken and bombed ships. An hour later the Highlanders arrived, having fought their way along the coast road. A tank regiment with the Scots aboard the turrets roared its way in. On the lead tank stood a piper playing a cheerful tune. Daylight came, and with it civilians appeared nervously from buildings of white, pink, and blue. All of them were pockmarked from shrapnel. Arabs curi-

ously sized up the conquerors, and somebody hoisted a Union Jack on the flagpole. Many men of the 11th Hussars had been with Wavell and were suspicious of the taste of victory which had so often bitterly eluded them. The whole regiment's footsteps echoed in the city — they had been the first into Tobruck, the first into Benghazi, and now the first into Tripoli.

The gang was together again for the first time since we congregated over cards in a lonely blacked-out ambulance. We hurried into the city and had a few drinks of vino in celebration, and then descended upon a horse-drawn carriage with an Italian driver and demanded the keys to the city. We mellowed gradually as we toured around in the open carriage. When we pulled up into the main square, the Piazza Castello, we learned of the coming visit of Winston Churchill. We stopped at the Grand Hotel, where in the height of jubilation one of us stood on his head and saluted a passing British officer.

There was little to do in town for everything was closed and the only excitement we had was to get inebriated. Tripoli had been emptied of foodstuffs, crops, flour, and operating machinery by the retreating enemy. The natives were left to shift for themselves or wait until we could tide them over until their next harvest.

When we got into town the bargaining was ideal — a handful of tea brought a dozen eggs. Bowron managed to find six bottles of champagne. But things began to change as the whole 8th Army poured in. Since the push they had had practically no place to spend a cent. Rolling in British occupation currency, and hungry for food and souvenirs, they made prices soar. No matter what price the natives asked, some Tommy would pay it, and as a result a flourishing black market sprang up. Eggs began retailing at a shilling apiece — approximately twenty cents. Thousands of soldiers were packed in streets of tiny shops that had nothing to sell.

The natives spoke French, Arabic, Italian, and German. We bartered with them in English pounds and shillings, Egyptian akkers or piasters, and Italian lire. In all transactions we translated the various currencies into dollars to get an idea of what we were getting into, whether we were being cheated or not. The Christmas wallets came in handy after all. The city itself slowly awakened. Military law and

business curfew reigned while we were there, but soon were replaced by civil authority.

Before leaving the city, I bought the first issue of the Tripoli *Times*, the city's newspaper, the only memento of my visit that I have kept through the years.

On a Sunday morning three thousand men of the 8th Army removed the dust and grime of many campaigns from their battle dress and gathered in the Piazza Castello before their commanders to praise God and to remember their comrades who had fallen in battle. Here Churchill spoke the sentence that meant more to them than the Victoria Cross. "When after the war is over a man is asked what he did, it will be enough for him to say I marched with the Eighth Army."

After spending two and a half days in Tripoli our unit was pulled out five days before Churchill's arrival and housed in fairly intact Italian military barracks up in the mountains in a town called Garian. We repaired our vehicles there, and I cooked some macaroni for the gang. This macaroni was one for the books. It was so hard that I soaked it for a day and practically cooked it to death for another day on a primus stove before it softened enough to be eaten. Doctoring it with spices, we ate the hot dish as a diversion from the usual rations.

While the barracks were being cleaned to serve as a rest camp for our brigade, I found a huge room that was to be used as a recreation hall. Its bare white walls were a temptation to doodle — especially for me. Being a muralist and having time on my hands, I decided to do some large-scale doodling. I found some paint left by the Italians who hadn't been considerate enough to leave anything but yellow and blue. In our own workshops I found a can of army brown.

I had previously done pinup-girl murals on board ship, under the bunks and on cabin doors (these in good taste). On the coast near Sirte were some intact Italian houses. In one of these, used as an Italian officers' quarters, where we had stayed for a night or two, I had done some murals which caused quite a commotion among the women-starved men. The one opposite the door depicted three luscious nudes, one reclining, one facing the depot, and one whose back was turned. The third one held a baby over her shoulder who pointed an accusing finger at whoever en-

CORRIERE DI TRIPOLI

NUM. III

27 GENNAIO 1943

PREZZO LIRA UNA

Governo Militare Britannico Tripolitania

Dichiarazione rispetto ai Magazzini di forniture militari alle forze armate di terra del mare e dell'aria in possesso dei privati.

Ordine N. 1 del 1943

Dal Rappresentante
del Capo dell'Ufficiale Politico.

Io, Maurizio Stanley Lush, Comandante dell'Eccellentissimo Ordine dell'Impero Britannico, su cui Sua Maestà si compiacque di conferire la Decorazione della Croce Militare, Brigadiere, in rappresentanza del Capo dell'Ufficiale Politico per la Tripolitania, nell'esercizio dei poteri conferitimi in virtù dell'articolo 1 (a) del proclama N. 6 dell'anno 1942, qui sotto ordino:

1) Qualsiasi persona avendo, alla data di quest'ordine, individualmente, congiuntamente con altra persona o persona in possesso o controllo di forniture militari a terra situate di terra del mare e dell'aria ed altro che possa essere come tale descritto, in qualsiasi parte del territorio occupato, entro 14 giorni dalla data di quest'ordine, o un periodo poco più lungo permesso da quest'Ufficiale Superiore Politico, deve dichiarare lo stesso, rendendo ampiamente i particolari al più vicino Ufficiale Politico ed al Ufficiale delle Forze di Polizia della Tripolitania.

(1) Qualsiasi persona, che nel tempo posteriore alla data di questo ordine tiene in possesso o controllo tali magazzini, forniture o proprietà dovrà subito farne dichiarazione nel senso indicato dal suddetto paragrafo (1);

2) Qualsiasi persona dichiarando detti magazzini, forniture o proprietà dovrà, su richiesta dell'Ufficiale Politico o dell'Ufficiale di Polizia, fornire, a soddisfazione di tale Ufficiale, prova del suo legale diritto di tali magazzini, forniture o proprietà e nella mancanza dell'esecuzione, può essere ordinato da detti Ufficiali di conseguire subito detti magazzini, forniture o proprietà;

3) Qualsiasi persona la quale dopo l'espiazione del periodo prescritto dal paragrafo 1 di questo ordine, verrà trovata in possesso o controllo simili magazzini, forniture o proprietà la cui dichiarazione fatta, dovrà comprovare tale dichiarazione;

4) Qualsiasi persona che:

(1) possiede o controlla tali magazzini, forniture o proprietà, manca di dichiarare, come richiesto da questo ordine, oppure:

(ii) dopo di aver ricevuto ordine di eseguire ciò, manca o si rifiuta di cedere detti magazzini, forniture o proprietà oppure non è in grado di fornire prova soddisfacente alla Corte del Tribunale del suo diritto legale ai magazzini, forniture o proprietà, sarà passibile di reato soggetto al Tribunale Militare, ad una multa non eccedente le lire sterline 200 oppure ad imprigionamento con o senza lavori forzati per un termine non eccedente gli anni 5, entrambe le pene;

5) I magazzini le forniture o proprietà comprovanti l'oggetto della mancanza saranno, con ordine della citata Corte, confiscate.

Datato a Tripoli il 25 Gennaio 1943.

M. S. LUSH

Brigadiere Rappresentante in Capo
dell'Ufficiale Politico.

L'ORA

Per evitare confusione negli orari, rammentiamo che l'orario in vigore in Tripoli è l'ora militare Britannica (corrispondente alla ex ora legale Italiana).

Ordine N. 2 anno 1943

Io, Maurizio Stanley Lush, Comandante dell'Eccellentissimo Ordine dell'Impero Britannico, su cui Sua Maestà si compiacque di conferire la Decorazione della Croce Militare, Brigadiere, in rappresentanza del Capo dell'Ufficiale Politico per la Tripolitania, nell'esercizio dei poteri conferitimi in virtù dell'articolo 1 (a) del proclama N. 6 del 1942, ordino quanto segue:

1) Tutte le persone entro i territori occupati, avendo, alla data di questo ordine, individualmente oppure congiuntamente con altra persona o persona, il possesso, custodia od il controllo di qualsiasi apparecchio radio ricevente, o parti di ricambio, accessori o del materiale da qualsiasi di sua natura, nonché per la costruzione, manutenzione e riparazione del medesimo, devono farlo avere entro le 48 ore dall'emissione di quest'ordine, al custode dei beni nemici, sala N. 18, Palazzo del Governo in Tripoli, oppure al più vicino Ufficiale Politico;

2) Tutte le persone contravvenendo agli ordini qui emanati sono passibili di reato e giudicabili dal Tribunale Militare ad imprigionamento, con o senza lavori forzati, per un termine che non eccede i 5 anni, oppure ad una multa non eccedente le lire sterline 200, entrambi multa ed imprigionamento;

3) Su tali pene la Corte, a sua discrezione, ordina la consegna dell'apparecchio radio ricevente, le parti di ricambio, accessori o del materiale che ha originato la manchevolezza del presente ordine.

M. S. LUSH

Brigadiere Rappresentante in Capo
dell'Ufficiale Politico della Tripolitania.
Datato in Tripoli il 25 gennaio 1943.

...

Ordine N. 3 del 1943

Io, Maurizio Stanley Lush, Comandante dell'Eccellentissimo Ordine dell'Impero Britannico, su cui Sua Maestà si compiacque di conferire la Decorazione della Croce Militare, Brigadiere Rappresentante in Capo dell'Ufficiale Politico, in esercizio dei poteri conferitimi in virtù degli articoli 1 (c) 1 (d) 1 (h) del programma N. 6 del 1942, qui sotto ordino:

(i) Tutte le persone, entro il territorio occupato, avendo, alla data di quest'ordine, sia individualmente o congiuntamente con altra persona o persona, il possesso, custodia, oppure il controllo di qualsiasi veicolo meccanico a propulsione di ogni specie, dovrà farne denuncia all'Ippodromo Bussetti per il 28 Gennaio 1943, alle ore 9, insieme coi loro veicoli, oppure nei distretti fuori Tripoli, come sarà indicato dall'Ufficiale Politico.

(ii) Tutte le persone, entro il territorio occupato, avendo, sia individualmente o congiuntamente con altra persona o persona, il possesso, custodia o controllo di pneumatici, tubi, arnesi, parti di ricambio o accessori per la riparazione, manutenzione o costruzione di tali veicoli dovranno dichiarare gli stessi entro 48 ore dall'emissione di quest'ordine al custode dei beni nemici, sala N. 8 nel Palazzo del Governo in Tripoli, oppure all'Ufficiale Politico del Distretto;

2) Dalla data di quest'ordine a nessun veicolo meccanico a propulsione sarà permesso di circolare entro i territori occupati, salvo munito di permesso emesso dal Governo Militare Britannico;

3) Dalla data di quest'ordine, la vendita, rimozione, scambio, trasferimento oppure ogni altro commercio di qualsiasi veicolo meccanico o pneumatici, tubi, arnesi, parte di ricambio oppure

Il cambio

La moneta dell'Autorità militare Britannica sarà adoperata dalle Forze Britanniche per pagare merci e servizi. Questa moneta è emessa in banconote dei seguenti valori:

1 Lst.	= 480 lire
10 scellini	= 240 »
5 »	= 120 »
2s. 6 d.	= 60 »
1 »	= 24 »

Data l'assenza di moneta di tagli inferiori tutte le trattazioni, per somme inferiori ad uno scellino saranno effettuate in lire.

Una lira = un halfpenny (mezzo penny)

Per informazione del pubblico 20 scellini o 240 pence (240 d o 480 halfpenny (1/2 d)).

Dalla Germania

Qui di seguito, pubblichiamo una lettera trovata sul campo di battaglia, nella direttrice tattica su Tripoli essa è stata inviata da una donna tedesca di Mannheim a suo marito soldato nella Afrika Korps.

« Mannheim 2 settembre, 1942 »

C'è ancora molto da fare nel negoziato, poiché il lavoro si è ammonitichato durante la mia assenza. Dopo il mio ritorno, gli apparecchi ci fanno visite pomeridiane dall'una alle due. Siamo ricoverati nel rifugio. Questi bombardamenti diurni sono sopportabili, perenne sono apparecchi da ricognizione e come tali, sganciano pochissime bombe. Per quanto riguarda le notti, posso dirvi che la nostra vita è orrenda, perché tutte le notti siamo ricoverate a causa delle continue incursioni. Questa notte, io sono scagliata contro Karlsruhe che si trova a pochi chilometri distante. Gli incendi sono continuati per tutta la giornata. Vado in città ogni mattina col treno delle sei e trenta, ma siamo sulla prima treno non potè partire prima delle nove.

Le notti trascorrono nei rifugi ci fanno abbruttire e poi bisogna affrettarsi in giornata per riguadagnare il tempo perso in cantina. Molta gente è partita in vacanza, proprio ora, per scampare i pericoli dall'aria. Immagino che abbiano inteso parlare degli attacchi su Mainz. Il luogo sembra così desolato da non poter credere.

Vendita di generi alimentari

Occorre richiamare l'attenzione dei membri delle Forze Britanniche e dei cittadini di Tripoli, sul fatto che solo la popolazione civile, ha il diritto di comprare pane e generi alimentari, dai negozianti e dalle panetterie. In proposito, rammentiamo alla popolazione che la Legge italiana è ancora in vigore.

Gli appartenenti alle FF. AA. Britanniche, non hanno diritto di usufruire dei generi alimentari, in alberghi e ristoranti di Tripoli; saranno costituiti circoli Ufficiali e truppe, gestiti dal Naafi, che insieme con i caffè autorizzati, potranno servire il tè, panini, ecc.

accessori è proibito ad eccezione delle Autorità sottoscritte dell'Ufficiale Politico Distrettuale o Provinciale ove essi si trovano;

4) Qualsiasi persona mancando di conformarsi con le disposizioni di quest'ordine, sarà passibile di reato soggetto al Tribunale Militare ad imprigionamento per un termine non eccedente gli anni 5 oppure ad una multa di lire sterline 200 oppure entrambi

AVVISO

Riapertura di locali commerciali

La vita commerciale della città di Tripoli riprende.

negozii ed imprese commerciali possono riaprire immediatamente.

Solo per i caffè, bars e ristoranti, è richiesto il permesso del Comandante della Polizia della Tripolitania.

L'orario di apertura e chiusura dei locali in genere sarà identico a quello osservato fino al 20 gennaio, con l'eccezione che tutti i locali dovranno chiudersi un'ora prima del coprifuoco.

I prezzi dei generi e dei servizi non dovranno superare quelli del 20 gennaio e il listino dei generi in vendita con i relativi prezzi, deve essere visibilmente esposto.

NOTIZIARIO

Mentre le forze dell'ottava armata, ieri raggiungevano Zava a circa cinquanta chilometri ad ovest di Tripoli, si continuavano l'inseguimento dei tedeschi, la K.A.F. picchiava il campo di aviazione Meden in Tunisia e le basi aeree della Sicilia.

Oggi per la prima volta la Stampa inglese ha pubblicato gli articoli dei loro inviati speciali presenti all'entrata dell'Ottava Armata a Tripoli.

Gli scozzesi sui primi carri armati sfilarono per le strade deserte, prima della città, svegliando la popolazione con i suoni delle pive. I Giornali hanno anche riportato in prima pagina, il resoconto dell'incontro fra il generale Montgomery ed il Vice Governatore della Libia, nonché le parole pronunciate dal generale che disse di desiderare che la vita civile riprendesse il suo ritmo ed aggiunse: « Io combatterò solo contro gli eserciti tedesco e italiano ».

IN RUSSIA

« Avete messo in rotta centodieci divisioni tedesche, avete preso duecentomila prigionieri, avete catturato tredici cannoni, avanzando per 300 km. e liberando centinaia di villaggi, dalla tirannia nazista. »

Avanti! Cacciate l'invasore dai nostri confini! »

Questo fa parte d'un ordine del giorno di Stalin, congratulandosi con l'esercito rosso. Lungo il fronte di 1000 Km. da Voronech alla pianura del Kuban, l'esercito rosso avanza mentre i tedeschi demoralizzati dai colpi di martello subito abbandonano materiale bellico di ogni genere. I russi hanno catturato un ingente bottino. Gli ultimi tedeschi hanno sgombrato i pressi di Voronech e lungo la strada che mena a Kersh le file colonne di tedeschi, in rotta, sono battute dall'aria senza tregua.

I sovietici hanno ripreso un nodo ferroviario, sulla strada di Rostov e cercano di prendere contatto con altre forze sovietiche che avanzano da Sakal.

GIORNATE AUSTRALIANE

Ieri era il giorno australiano: 155. anniversario dell'arrivo in Australia, dei primi coloni inglesi.

Era anche il 63° compleanno del gen. McArthur.

multa ed imprigionamento, la Corte, a sua discrezione, può ordinare la consegna senza il compenso di alcun veicolo, pneumatici, tubi, arnesi, parti di ricambio oppure accessori, provati che sono oggetto di manchevolezza.

Datato in Tripoli il 25 Gennaio 1943.

M. S. LUSH

Brigadiere Rappresentante in Capo
dell'Ufficiale Politico

TRIPOLI TIMES

NUM. 3

TRIPOLI, 27 JANUARY 1943

PRICE ONE LIRA

Eighth Army Still Advancing

While the land forces of the Eighth Army had yesterday reached Zavia, 25 miles West of Tripoli, and were continuing the pursuit of the fleeing Germans, the Air Force was pounding the landing ground at Medenin in Tunisia and airfields in Sicily.

As a result of the rapid advance of the Eighth Army Italy is now open to intensive attacks from the air. A radio commentator yesterday pointed out that we had promised to bomb Italy and bomb her we will. Mussolini's back garden will no longer be a safe refuge.

Britain to-day learned the story of the entry of the Eighth Army into Tripoli, how Highlanders riding on tanks first

entered the deserted streets, and roused the inhabitants with the skirl of the pipes.

"It was a proud thing to see the Mayor of Tripoli hand over the city to General Montgomery," said a B.B.C. correspondent. General Montgomery told the Mayor that the Army's main concern was to see that civil life continued. "My fight is with the Italian and German Armies," added General Montgomery.

Three Way War

Air Expert MURRAY-SMITH analyses the part played by the air arm in Eighth Army's victory.

As in mid January, the first bombs from our bombers and Balmores fell among the hangars and workshops of Castel Benito, a few miles south of Tripoli, the last phase was reached of an air plan that may well prove a model for future historians.

When the light bomber squadrons were based on landing grounds not far from Alexandria they were employed to launch an offensive which blasted the enemy's Alamein gun positions and destroyed his forward supply dumps.

Then the Eighth Army so smashed Rommel's forces that they broke and fled; and we pursued them with another weapon the use of which we had well-nigh perfected — the fighter — bomber.

LIGHT PLANES STRIKE

All the way on that 1,000 miles thread along the North African coastline, past Mersa Matruh and on to Tobruk, and then beyond to Derna and Barca and Benghazi, south and west again to Agheila and to Sirte, all that way we struck at the Axis troops by means of our most «mobile» aircraft, the light planes which needed the least amount of servicing on the ground.

Wherever resistance hardened, as it did twice, at Agheila and again at Buziat, the light bombers were brought up to give weight to the fighter-bomber attacks. But the main air pursuit was carried out by the fighter-bombers and not until the gates of Tripoli were they needed again in force, the Balmores, Bostons and Mitchell B. 25's.

Here, however, the target was concentrated as it had been in Egypt, indeed much more so, for now it included the dock facilities and military objectives in the town itself.

For more than a month the light bomber squadrons had remained on their landing grounds far in the rear, with air crews chafing at the delay and wondering why there was nothing for them to do. Meanwhile, immense supplies of fuel, oil, bombs, ammunition, food and dumped adjacent to newly prepared landing grounds.

Rout the Invader: Stalin Message

«You have routed 102 German Divisions, taken 200,000 prisoners, captured 13,000 guns, advanced 200 miles and freed hundreds of places from the Nazi tyranny.

«Forward! Rout the invaders and drive them from our borders!"

This was part of an order of the day issued by Stalin, congratulating the Red Army.

Across a 600-mile front, from Voronezh to the Kuban plains, the Red Army is driving the fleeing Germans. Demoralised by the successive hammer blows delivered by the Soviets, floundering through snow covered country, living from hand to mouth, the plight of the German soldiers is a hapless one.

Material of all sorts is being abandoned, and the Russians have captured booty worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. The last Germans have now been driven from Voronezh, and on the road to Kersh the German columns fleeing to the east are being rounded unmercifully.

The Soviets have captured a key railway junction on the highway to Rostov, and are now linking up with a Soviet force making its way South from Salsk.

What's The Time?

In order to avoid confusion every one is reminded that the time in force in Tripoli is British Military (Cairo Time). British Military time is one hour in advance of Tripoli time before the occupation of the city.

German Spy Executed

The 13th German spy since the war began was yesterday executed at Wandsworth prison. He was a 39-year-old Belgian, a ship steward.

Posing as a refugee, and stating that he had had to flee Belgium, and had been for some time in a German concentration camp, this man landed in Britain from a ship last July.

His story was suspect, and he was held for investigation. He broke down and confessed that he was in the pay of the German Secret Service. He had attended a course at a training school for spies, where he had been taught how to use invisible ink for sending messages.

He was sent to Britain, where he was to have got a job as a ship steward, and thus get information of shipping movements. These he was to send to an address in a neutral country.

Australia Day

Yesterday was Australia Day, 15th anniversary of the arrival of the first British settlers in Australia. It was also General McArthur's 63rd birthday.

Important to Know

Life in the City of Tripoli is rapidly returning to normal. Everything possible is being done to this end and that is the reason why you should read the following notices carefully.

The other about food has been made for the welfare of the civil population. We have our own rationed and we would be depriving the civil population of food if we bought theirs.

Reopening of Business premises

The commercial life of the city of Tripoli has restarted and shops and businesses may reopen their doors forthwith. In the case of cafes, bars and restaurants, however, the permission of the Commandant of Tripolitanian Police must first be obtained. Hours of business will be those in force on January 20, 1943, with the exception that all premises must close their doors one hour before the evening curfew.

The prices of goods and services will not be higher than those of 20th January and price lists of all goods on sale must be prominently.

Sale of bread and foodstuffs

It is desired to draw the attention both of members of the British Armed Forces and of the citizens of Tripoli to the fact that only the civil population may buy bread and foodstuffs from shops and bakeries. In this connection the civil population is reminded that Italian law still applies. Neither may members of the British Forces partake of food at hotels and restaurants in Tripoli. There will, however, be clubs for Officers and other ranks run by the N.A.F.I. which, together with duly authorised cafes, may serve tea and buns.

BOMBS OVER GERMANY

The letter we reprint below was found on the field of battle on the way to Tripoli. It is from a German woman in Mannheim to her husband in the Africa Corps.

There is still a lot to do in the shop, for the work piled up while I was away. And since I came back we have been visited by aeroplanes every afternoon. From 1 o'clock to 2 we sit in the shelter every day. We could put up with that, because they drop very few bombs (for they are Rome planes). But as far as the night is, I can only tell you that we have to put up with a lot.

Every single night we sit in the shelter. Today they made a fierce attack on Karlsruhe, which is only a few miles from here. Fires have been burning there all day. I go to the cinema today the first train came in earlier than 9 o'clock. You sit completely done when you've got to spend your night in the shelter. And day as you've got to make up the time you lose sitting in the cellar.

A lot of people have gone on holiday just now, for they all want to escape the danger from the air. You must have heard of the mass attacks on Mainz. The place looks so desolate that you can scarcely believe that things like that can happen. So far our house has been spared and I hope that it will continue to be so.

tered. Unfortunately we had left before one of the boys could take pictures for my record.

For the recreation room at Garian, I decided upon a super-duper nude encompassing the entire wall, 30 x 15 feet. Usually when a muralist works he uses a scale pattern of a small sketch or a photograph of the sketch projected onto the wall. He carefully traces this, insuring his proportions. In this case I had neither the time to make this sketch nor the means of projecting it. And to top it all — no scaffolding. I managed to get up by means of boxes, but this meant that my nose was rarely more than six inches away from the wall. Starting from the head, I worked down to the feet on this beautiful virgin wall. To this day I don't know how I kept the figure in proportion. When I stood back to inspect the completed figure, I found that the top outline of her body ironically coincided with the coastal line of North Africa. I marked her off as the Middle East from Tripoli (Lebanon) to Tripoli (Libya) and named parts of her body for nonexistent wadis: Wadi you hiding? Wadi you doing? Wadi you say? Wadi you know? Superimposed on her from Syria to Tunis were Lilliputian figures of the units, men, and doings of the 8th Army. Somewhere near the midriff is a blown-out German tank with the string of old boots tied behind and a caption on the back, "Just Married." Above her soared the RAF and American 9th Air Force whose eager men were parachuting onto her. Along with the confusion of armored cars, convoys, and slit-trench digging on her terrain was a key figure similar to the Kilroy of the U.S. Army. It was a little Tommy in a sitting position holding the inevitable stretched-out newspaper and shovel. He was among the parachutists, the infantry, the armored units, and even at chow call. Such was life in the desert.

The colonel of the brigade came in with Lieutenant James Ullman. At the colonel's request I designed the stage and backdrop for this room and attached roof tiles from a blown-out building to wooden panels for a proscenium. For the background I painted a surrealist desert scene dominated by two large snails, surrounded by sagebrush, crawling along the coast road which was spanned by Marble Arch, the halfway point between Alexandria and Tunis. On top of the arch flew the Union Jack. Out of the clouds came three planes bearing the American flag; the ruins of

Cyrenica were in the distance. All objects cast long Daliesque shadows across the sand. I did two other scenes, one depicting a Tommy waking up in a slit trench, being waited upon by luscious nudes serving steak and potatoes. The other was a Tommy sitting under a grape arbor, surrounded by beautiful nudes bearing jugs of wine, the Bacchus of the desert! Lieutenant Ullman avidly took pictures of my painting and of the finished murals, being very meticulous about angles, light, and so forth. He promised me prints for my scrapbook. When I saw him later in Cairo and asked

him about them, he shamefacedly admitted that he must have been desert-happy at the time, for he had forgotten to put film in the camera.

It took eight hours to paint the large mural, finally called the Lady of Garian, three hours apiece for the other two, and two hours for the background.

The colonel asked me to stay on at the rest camp as interpreter for the British authorities, but I wanted to be with the gang, do the job, and have greater opportunities to record the war. The griff now circulating among the



LADY OF GARIAN MAP



LADY OF GARIAN DETAILS

men was that Rommel would either make a stand and fight at Medenine, a contemplated defense-position approach to the Mareth Line, or would retreat within this line of supposedly impregnable concrete pillbox defenses. Either way, a battle was coming up and I didn't want to miss it.

Leaving the Lady of Garian to those more in need of her, we moved out as a reconnaissance outfit into the melting days of the almost forgotten desert for Fom Tatahouine, the southern outpost of the Mareth Line.

Somewhere around here we were to establish an RAP, an ADS, and an MDS.

As we traveled southwest to a procedure point on the

map, we were within range of and constantly eyed by Jerry's 88-millimeter guns which were hidden in the Atlas Mountains to our left. This versatile gun was quite accurately maneuverable and Jerry used it most effectively either as an anti-aircraft gun or an anti-tank gun or as an artillery weapon. Consequently we were in constant fear of a giant sniper's barrage.

En route we came upon some jeeps around which were clustered tall Arabs and urchins bartering for tea. When we pulled up alongside, the Arabs turned out to be a band of blond and red-bearded British desert guerrillas who wore the traditional headdress of the Bedouin. They were

a group of the notorious LRDG (Long Range Desert Group). Beneath their breeze-blown robes, they were walking arsenals. Each sand-caked jeep carried two 50-caliber guns, mounted on metal frames over the windshields which were heavily smeared with oil and sand to cut down the glare and reflection to the enemy.

It was always the hope of one of us fire-eaters to go on a patrol with some of these men, but that was wishful thinking, for in their secret missions they worked alone behind enemy lines, sometimes hundreds of miles back.

The LRDG exploits became legendary and were more daring than anything fictional. There wasn't a man in the



ON TO TUNISIA

8th Army who hadn't some tale to tell of their harassment of Rommel or of their attack on his headquarters in an effort to capture him. These raiding operations took a steady toll of their gallant men but they continuously crippled Rommel's supply column, raided his munition dumps and airfields, and swooping in the dark of night on unsuspecting enemy camps, left a trail of death and destruction behind them.

For this work, they went through months of intensive training, iron discipline, tested courage, and developed the ability to use almost any kind or make of weapon. Added to this, they were masters of demolition charges, moving across country without making a noise, and of the superb poker ability to bluff in awkward situations.

One inside story demonstrates their split-second thinking. Two of them, creeping silently up on a heavily fortified enemy post, were discovered by a suspicious sentry who gave the alarm. Immediately a blinding searchlight beam caught them standing plunk in the middle of the surrounding barbed-wired entanglement of the outpost. In spite of their training to hit the dust and escape the beam, they turned without hesitation to the light and signaled, pointing urgently in another direction: "They went thata way!" The bluff worked; the light shifted long enough for them to steal away into the night like a couple of Arabs without their tents.

Our chance meeting on the desert with the guerrilla group was rare in a battle area. It was short and full of inquiries and not conducive to sketching. It was one of those times when our MDS of the 14th LFA was ahead of itself and its brigade and a month ahead of Montgomery's flanking movement at the Mareth Line. Also up in the surrounding Atlas Mountains Jerry's 88 mm's were looking down on us.

Although I never did paint any LRDG men, I managed to sketch their counterpart, the armored patrols who operated in a more orthodox military fashion and with whom we were oftentimes attached, the 11th Hussars (the Cherry Pickers) of the 7th Armoured Brigade. Known as the British Bedouins, they carried out patrols which rivaled in audacity, courage, and physical stamina the exploits of the mysterious LRDG.

Encased in the armor of their vehicles, these skillful

navigators demonstrated the advanced technique they employed on patrols. They drove blind, steered by radio, in the vast wastes of the desert sixty miles behind enemy lines, going for long periods of time without water. Not even when ammunition and gasoline were brought to them every day did they ever lose their mobility and freedom of action. They roamed the desert releasing British prisoners, wrecking tanks and vehicles, and forcing Rommel to withdraw valuable troops to protect his lines of communication. *They* were called the "Desert Rats" and answered proudly to the name. Today the wind and sand swirl over many of their graves, but their tradition has never died.

When Wee Wee signed over his ambulance to me, I streamlined it for further efficiency of maintenance and for my needs. This enabled me to have the opportunity of painting without interfering with evacuation duties. A rack installed on the inside, which did not interfere with patients, carried my kit, canteen, and primus stove. As a non-union electrician I put a light switch on the interior ceiling of the car. Handier than the dashboard switch, it was convenient for quick blackouts and operations performed on RAP duty. It was also good for poker playing. I carried a collapsible table, used for card sessions, writing, and painting, attached to the petrol-tin rack on the outside. With this setup, I was ready, willing, and able for anything.

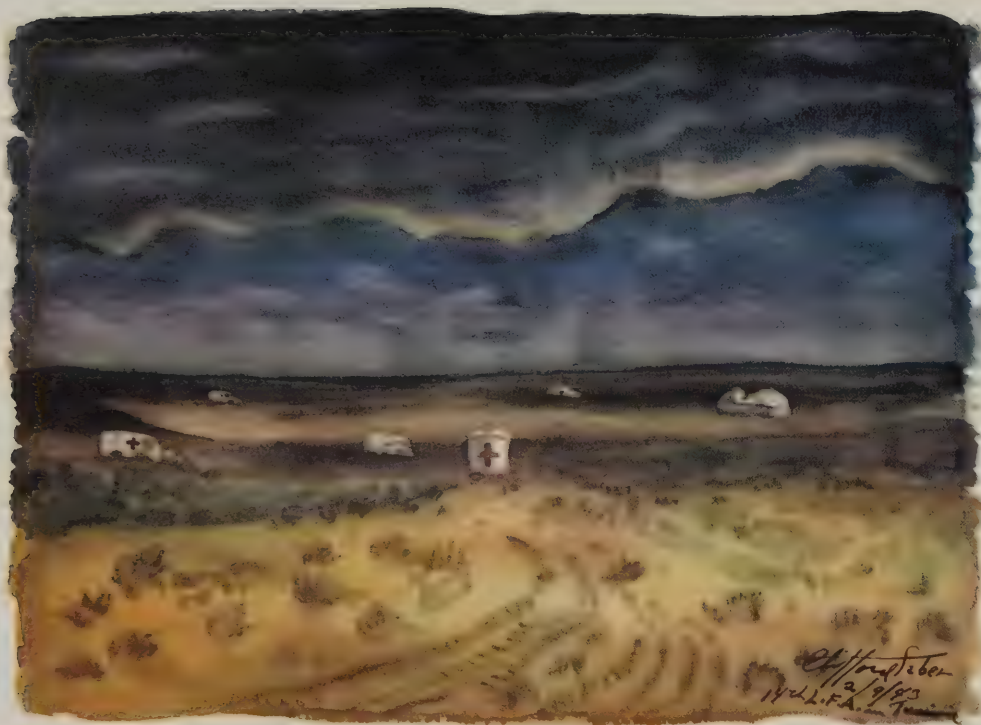
There was method in Wee Wee's madness of wanting the freedom afforded a spare driver. After his exciting sojourn with the Desert Bedouins, he always volunteered when a Recce (reconnaissance) assignment came up. Several times he left me to live a lone Bedouin existence with an ADS until he was replaced by transient spare drivers.

Wee Wee moved in with me after Junior went back to Egypt for a much-needed rest. With Wee Wee came his rolling farm of two hens which he kept in a whiskey crate filled with straw. He ingeniously fastened on a canvas top from a scrounged Itie knapsack and called it his Patent Poultry Pen.

We attached the mobile farmyard to the front bumper of the car and drove along the desert terrain as carefully as we did with wounded. One hen was black and silver. We called her Cleo, short for Cleopatra. The other was a red-head dubbed Fathouma. Their cackling was pleasing at times for it broke the deathly silence of the vast wastes,



SUN RAYS TUNISIA



14 LFA NIGHT LEAGUER

but occasionally they overdid it and I was for having a chicken dinner. Wee Wee kept an eye on me, for once before when he had his own ambulance he had proudly owned two roosters which he had guarded carefully but somehow, somewhere, they had disappeared. Someone quietly scrounged them one night around Christmastime. He still suspected the AFS cooks but couldn't prove anything.

We fed the chickens crushed hardtrack biscuits and during the day when we were not on duty we let them loose to scrounge for themselves. They pecked all around the ambulance and like pets rarely strayed away.

Every morning for days we looked for eggs in the coop but none were to be found. The day did come when, corraling the chicks for a hurried duty call, Wee Wee and I discovered we were fathers — Fathouma had laid an egg beneath the ambulance and we were fortunate in discovering it before we pulled out. It turned out that both chickens had been depositing eggs all over the desert; we had just been looking for them in the wrong place. Each morning thereafter, like caddies looking for golf balls, we hunted for eggs.

Whenever we received a hurried call for duty or a move to our next point, we had a hell of a time corraling the chickens. Usually Wee Wee had to climb on top of the ambulance and grab. After many days of trial and error, we devised a scheme as good as a Texas roundup system. As I opened the doors to the back of the ambulance Wee Wee chased the chickens in and I locked up the whole family. Patients lying in the back often said they thought they heard something that sounded like chickens cackling. When they were informed that they heard right, they lost the fear that something was wrong with them mentally. There were always questions about when we were going to eat our hens and why we were carrying them through miles and miles of desert. Our reply was — for the day we met up with the Americans and the 1st Army and then — good old southern-fried chicken.

Back in Egypt at the breakout, it had been a scrounger's paradise with wreckage extending for miles. Tunisia, as we entered it, was clean virgin country with no signs of war except a few deserted Arab huts. Being a scrounge addict, Wee Wee went off on a lone safari when we leaguered en

route to our movement point. He returned with a porous Arab water jug which he had found in a deserted hut. He also returned with fleas and lice.

We were wearing winter battle dress, a heavy woolen olive drab with brass buttons. The latter had a habit of coming off at the wrong time and continuously — no matter how strongly and well you sewed them on. Many a night I spent doing nothing but sewing buttons on both pants and tunic. The uniform was comfortable, warm, but itchy. The itchiness was irritating, but now with lice we scratched away until we had the opportunity to fumigate the ambulance and soak ourselves in raw petrol. We eliminated the pests and also Wee Wee's scrounging addiction.

In convoy, while we plowed through a sandstorm, Wee Wee took over the wheel and gave me the opportunity while the light lasted to paint various phases of the storm on the move. We were entering enemy territory where the LRDG's had just made a reconnaissance. They had reported to Montgomery, giving him valuable information for his plan for the battle of the Mareth Line. We had the strange feeling that the eyes of 88 mm's were looking down on us from the Matmata Mountains on our left. We were never really scared when we were actually being shelled, bombed, or machine gunned, for we were too busy working, and then too you weren't alone, for no matter where you looked you saw other units and men close by. Now we were alone, going toward a spot where a month later the New Zealand Division with some 27,000 men and 200 tanks were to overcome the difficult terrain and enemy action by outflanking the Mareth Line to Hamma. As a lone moving brigade, with the thought of Jerry surrounding us, we became more uneasy the farther we penetrated his territory. The khamseen camouflaged us from the enemy but its intensity hid us from each other as well, and it was a job for Wee Wee to keep the ambulance ahead of us in sight.

Once we of the 4th Light Armoured Brigade crossed the border, the enemy resistance stiffened with rear-guard action and our light advance forces were hampered by the weather and rough going. The griff came in about Jerry's activity in the Mareth Line. The 7th Armoured Division took the first main outpost of the line, Ben Gardane, and we were one of the forward units on the move to the important road centers of Medenine and Fom Tatahouine.



CONVOY IN SANDSTORM 1

While Rommel was strongly attacking with his panzers in southern Tunisia, Montgomery was bringing up his supplies, reinforcements, and air wings to the Medenine positions. General Leclerc and his French force made a remarkable drive across the desert from Lake Chad to the

battle zone.

We stopped in the middle of the khamseen for a brew-up and the rumors flew around in the midst of the sand-blasting wind. They were usually misleading, contradictory, speculative, and wrong. Word came to us of the first Amer-



CONVOY IN SANDSTORM 2

ican defeat somewhere southwest of us in the mountains at Faid Kasserine Pass. The early news of the casualties of our fellow countrymen staggered us and struck the whole gang speechless. We experienced inexplicable tug, hurt, and we-want-to-be-there feeling.

Rommel had launched an attack against the Americans around Gafsa and the Yanks withdrew toward Tebessa. The enemy penetration was threatening to outflank the Allied positions in the north and the situation looked grave.

Later, when the accurate statistics of the defeat and of the retaking of the objectives came over the Tiggy wireless, we perked up and became our old selves again.

The men of the 8th Army had a limited knowledge, at the time, of the Anglo-American forces in southern Tunisia. They knew nothing of the number of American troops or how they were thinly spread out along their mountainous line of combat. They knew that the American army, although green in combat, was the best equipped and best fed of the Allied forces. They were anxious to meet and join hands with them but were more interested in beating them to the punch and rubbing out the Afrika Korps.

Our convoy, because of its size, moved slowly across the unknown terrain against the wind of sand. At one point, the visibility was so bad I stopped painting and we opened the oil- and sand-covered windshield. The sand and dust came at us with a driving force which surpassed any blizzard I had ever encountered in New England. Fog, mist, and sleet were treacherous for driving but this peppering of sand in all directions from one bit of desolation to another was damn-all. Nevertheless, we withstood the open-window sand blasting for a while for the sake of visibility.

The Arab was right, for the khamseen could stop anything and drive anyone to insanity. Yet these natives weathered such storms, although how they kept going so long was a mystery none of us could fathom. You saw them wending their way through the khamseen across mine fields and it made you shudder.

You saw them living among the absolute ruins of villages, and some came from nowhere passing through the convoy camp site. En route we came across one dead beside his blown-up camel. They had both hit a mine.

When the fury of the storm shifted away from in front of us, we closed the windshield. I started to paint again in

the sandstorm, protected by the windows of the ambulance. It was an exciting mental stimulus which eliminated the strain of the storm's impact and the boring time of passing through it.

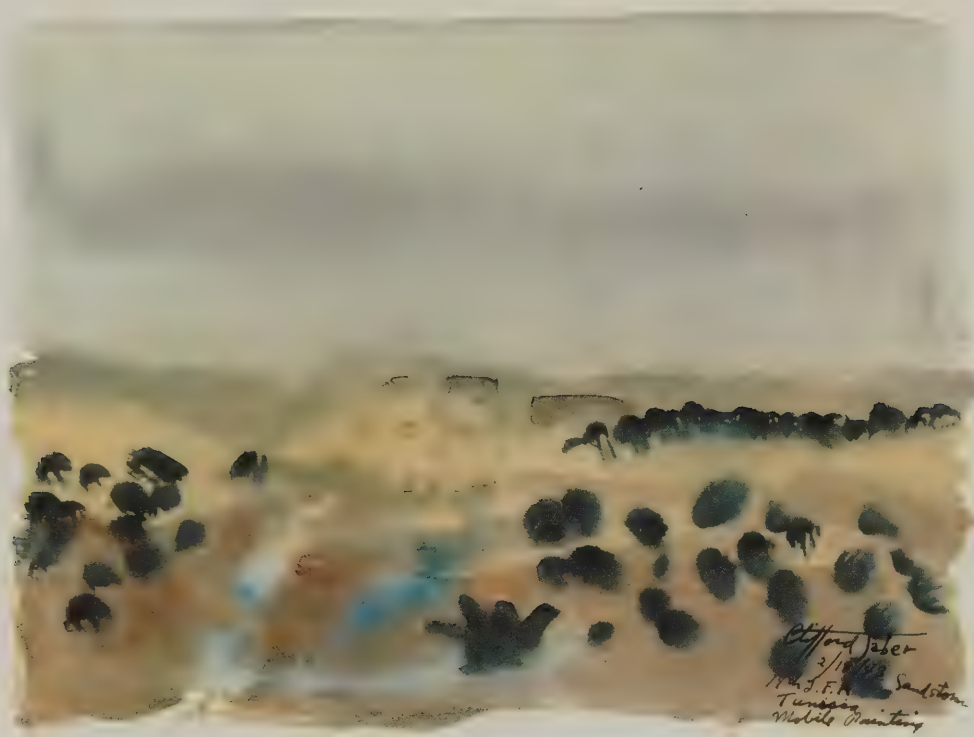
Sketching during the campaign and reporting what I saw was so challenging and so engrossing that during lulls of inactivity I lost all sense of time. I had many problems besides that of executing the work. One day I received permission to leave our campsite to go over to sketch a Bofors gun team who were lolling about in the Tunisian sun. I took a bearing on a mountain and walked a mile to get to them. In the midst of painting the weather changed and a small dust storm kicked up, raising havoc with paint and paper. I stopped work briefly for a brew-up and a chat with the Tommies until the wind died down. They were the No. 2 Detachment "B" Troop of the Royal Army Ack-Ack Battery. Just as I had resumed painting, the aircraft warning sounded and Messerschmidts came over. The crew were at their stations manning the gun in a matter of seconds. I dropped the sketch book, grabbed my steel helmet, and kept out of the way while the gun fired away. The suspense and tension were indescribable, for these guns were always the targets of Jerry, and to get them out of the way he resorted to bombing and low-level strafing. I was frightened out of my wits, but the crew were joking as they fired. One plane was downed and the RAF soon appeared and circled overhead. Trying to look nonchalant, I got back to painting, and concentrating on my subjects, I felt the terror I had known a few minutes before go out of me.

Although we had another air alert, I finished the painting and did a bonus picture for myself for sticking around the gun during all the air activity that was going on. It was a portrait of Sergeant in Command Cyril Owen, the only survivor of this gun's original crew.

The gun itself certainly had had an interesting history, a taste of which I got that afternoon. It had seen service in France, during Wavell's Push, in the siege of Tobruk, and in the entire Western Desert campaign. Its crew was wiped out three times, once by shell fire, once by bombing, and once by machine-gun fire. Once when the gun was disabled and the crew casualties, Sergeant Owen moved the wounded back and pulled the gun away from a burning ammunition lorry. At the time I did the picture, which



CONVOY IN SANDSTORM 3



CONVOY IN SANDSTORM 4

had a suède finish from the dust storm, he was up for a military medal. He was truly a Desert Rat.

It had got dark by the time I returned to the outfit and with the darkness I had lost my bearings and found myself wandering around among a bunch of tanks. The excitement of the afternoon had subsided and now I feared the Ger-

man night patrols, which had been frequenting our units, coming down from the hills, taking prisoners, and dynamiting a vehicle or two. However, a tank man gave me instructions as to where the 14th LFA was, and I located Wee Wee by the cackling of Cleo and Fathouma.

Subject matter came to me in several different ways,

such as the time I picked up a forced-down South African pilot, Lieutenant Eric Newby from Johannesburg. He was on duty bombing Gabes when his Kitty Hawk engine cut out over the German lines. He managed to glide down near us and belly-flopped his plane. It was most important for him to report his whereabouts to his air base within twenty-four hours for otherwise he would have been declared missing.

As night was approaching Wee Wee and I sped the lieutenant by ambulance to the airfield. Upon arrival we discovered nothing but an empty field surrounded by ack-ack crews. The planes and their crews had moved elsewhere due to the shelling from the German 88 mm's in the mountains. A Bofore crew informed us where the new field was located, and we took off in the dark and found it.

When we arrived we found this field also empty and surrounded by ack-ack guns. This was the right field, however, and we learned from one of the gunners that the planes of our pilot's wing had not yet arrived but would be along in the morning. I parked the Dodge in a small oasis at the edge of the field which was surrounded by plenty of Bofores. Although they served as protection, they were also prime targets for Jerry's 88's lodged up in the hills. On the primus I cooked some macaroni and other stuff I had bartered along the line, and we had a feed topped off with a can of peaches. Newby posed for me and I got a nice story for the caption to the painting. All through the night we anticipated a shelling of some sort which never came. At dawn the planes of his squadron flew in and our guest departed.

By doing a picture of some sort every day I started to hit my stride in the true water-color medium, the old French method of painting aquarelles — that is, abstaining from the use of opaques. The most interesting were the operation scenes done in two-hour sittings. My recording was done with the team of Lieutenant Colonel Clifford Evans who was in command of the 14th LFA, and RAMC Surgeon Captain Samuel Vincent who became so enthralled watching me paint that he took up the art. Later when I returned to the States I sent him painting equipment for his tour of duty in Germany.

The surgical wonders he performed under adverse conditions were fabulous. On a busy day he would do as many

as fourteen or fifteen operations, taking anywhere from a half hour to two hours apiece, and then with two or three hours of sleep, get up and resume his work in the operating theater. He had a wonderful Irish sense of humor and occasionally after working all day or night he would look up and make a remark that would make everybody laugh and relieve the tension. Other times when planes came in too low and close to the tent he'd swear good-naturedly and keep on operating.

His mobile surgical room was always ready to be moved at a moment's notice. This room was nothing but a tarpaulin slung from the back of a three-ton lorry and suitably propped up with metal struts to make enough light-proof space to perform an operation. Vincent worked all hours, but mostly at night as the brigade was usually on the move during the day.

As I painted scenes of this operating room I tried to keep out of the way, but assisted now and then by handing equipment which fell within my reach.

I also once tried to sketch a formation of attacking Folke-Wolfs in the very midst of actual close fire and bombing. My calculations said that a direct hit on this human ant were slim. Knowing it was nigh impossible, I gave it a try, if only to prove to myself whether or not the American magazines' fantastic war paintings "executed under fire" were grossly exaggerated or true. Perhaps some artists could stay out in the open and paint, impervious to bombs and bullets. As for myself, I can convey only a post mortem impression of myself dropping everything and running across open ground to dive into a slit trench next to the ambulance.

A sense of both reality and unreality surrounded me; I was assailed with nightmarish sounds as though I were caught inside a belfry gone berserk. At the same time it seemed that the haunting eyes of ravens called Folke-Wolfs stared down at me as they dropped their eggs and intoned, "Nevermore."

I wasn't scared, I was petrified. I peeked out of my trench to survey the results of the few bombs that had dropped near by, and spotted Wee Wee beneath the ambulance with the chickens who were clucking away. It was the first and last time I tried to paint such a scene. Self-preservation comes first.



CONVOY IN SANDSTORM 5

Making Armoured Cars

2/23/43

Everytime the bully beef appears which was daily, someone is sure to remark that there are 157 ways to prepare it, but that he has seen only one and that is enough. However, despite the monotony of bully beef, in some form or other, day in and day out, some cooks are able to make appetizing dishes. Among them are "armoured cars", which cooks of the 14th LFA-ADS are laboring at in this sketch. The beef is mashed, margarine, and chopped onions added, and the resulting patty dipped in a batter and fried. Though the results are a bit mystifying in their thick jackets, one finds these "armoured cars" very appealing once they lose their thick skin. So well is the taste of bully camouflaged that apart from fresh meat, which is almost purely imaginary, "armoured cars" is the favorite dish of the 8th Army.

Clifford Jaber

2/23/43

14 LFA-ADS-D'section

"Making Armoured Cars"



"Biscuit" Crawford, 7362803

"Aftermath of 'Armoured Cars'"
Tunisia 2/23/43

"Biscuit" Crawford was the head chef of the 14th L.F.A. - A.D.S., D section. He saw service in Norway, France (Dunkirk) and the entire Western Desert Campaign. He was the Lou Costello comedian of our little party, but for a time his style was cramped by a burned hand which he got making "Armoured Cars".

"Aftermath of 'Armoured Cars'"

Biscuit Crawford 7362402

1941 FA ADS

Clifford Jaber

2/23/43



B.B.C. News

2/23/43

No matter what is happening, seven o'clock each evening will find a large percentage of each unit clustered around a radio awaiting the familiar "Hearts of Oak" and the following "This is London Calling." Aside from meals, listening to the news provides the only social gathering in the desert. To many the best part of the day comes with the news. As the Greenwich time signal sounds, a hush falls over the group, and new cigarettes are lit. If the news is good as it generally has been during our stay in the desert, the group is wreathed in smiles. Any mention of the 8th Army drew special attention, and often the B.B.C. is our sole source of information regarding our progress or whereabouts.

Here the wireless is set up in the back of the truck which is used as a reception for an ADS, and some of the personnel are shown absorbing the news from London.



News

2/20/83

"Cutting Hair" 14 LFA-ADS Tunisia 2/24/43

Desert Haircut

One of the greatest problems encountered on the desert is getting a haircut. Every unit usually boasted of many would be barbers but persuading the real McCoy to perform was a different matter. With civvy barbers in the army, hair cutting is a ritual, and they become offended if they find any sand in the hair, or on hearing, "Any way will do just so its off." The masters always use carefully guarded clippers, scissors, and combs brought from England and tenderly wrapped in a towel. Although many of these professionals are prospering, barbering usually has to be a reciprocal process between two novices armed with anything up to and including a pair of garden shears.

One of the drivers attached to the ADS of the 14th Light Field Ambulance Company is pictured standing in front of his ambulance trimming another Tommy's hair. Detail here shows the driver's blankets on the ground carefully wrapped in a ground sheet, all his gear in the vehicle, and a canvas windscreen hanging on the door. The famous Desert Rat divisional sign is on the fender.

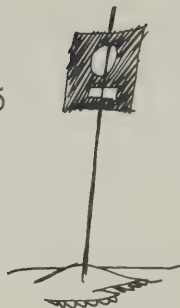


"Cutting Hair"
14LFA-ADS Tunisia
Pfc. Fred Sober 2/24/43



"FOUM TATAHOINE"

Chapter 5



FORWARD TO TUNIS

On 5th March, Rommel addressed his troops...and said that if they did not take Medenine and force the Eighth Army to withdraw, then the days of the Axis forces in North Africa were numbered....He should have known that the Eighth Army NEVER WITHDRAWS; therefore his attack could only end in failure—which it did....

We will show Rommel he was right....The days of the Axis forces in North Africa are indeed numbered.

In the battle that is now to start the Eighth Army: (a) Will destroy the enemy now facing us in the Mareth position. (b) Will burst through the Gabes Gap. (c) Will then drive northwards on Sfax, Sousse and finally Tunis....

FORWARD TO TUNIS! DRIVE THE ENEMY INTO THE SEA!

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S dispatch to the troops,
March 1943



14TH LFA — ADS — "D" SECTION

AT FOUM TATAHOINE, where an old Arab fort commands the pass, we came across fields of beautiful flowers instead of flat dull featureless desert. The flourishing palm trees and mountain ranges were very reminiscent of California. Although they looked serene and majestic, death lurked in them and the noses of 88's were ever haunting and looking down.

Sometimes we got a rumor Jerry had broken through here and there, and sometimes the guns were close and sometimes far. Men who were burned from fires set by the enemy patrols or peppered by mines and shrapnel comprised the majority of our casualties, and we shuttled them to the MDS of the brigade in the rear.

We moved about more at this southern outpost of the Mareth Line than at any other time throughout the desert campaign. The time for movement always came. We would start the car. The form of the vehicle ahead disappeared in the billows of dust and we got it in our eyes. Gradually we lost direction, sense of time, and sense of everything. We left the movement to take several stretcher cases to the rear. We came back searching for the constantly moving ADS.

Later we learned that through all this maneuvering we had been cut off from our main outfit, the 7th Armoured Division, and as with the experience of coming out of an accident, the shock of what had transpired set in. It was an uncanny feeling for we had been unaware of our predicament. If we had known that we were encircled, I often wonder what the reactions would have been for we were a group of men accustomed to the sight and company of other units. We had a brief mental taste of what the LRDG's had been going through during the entire desert campaign.

At one point we remained stationary at a place about 3 kilos from a small town. I was asked by Colonel Evans to see if I could get some French bread which we heard was on sale in the town. Also I was asked to inquire if there was a chemist's shop or drugstore which developed and printed films. I questioned the Tunisian Arabs, and they told me the way to the baker's where I learned that

I had to have a formal chit from the French commandant to buy bread. This I didn't get, for bread was rationed and taking advantage of our military authority would have deprived the townspeople of this vital commodity. Also a false rumor had spread that their bread was being issued to our troops. But this pertained to only a few loaves that had been given to a patrol unit that had arrived there in pursuit of the retreating Jerry.

In the market place, which had only carrots for sale, the Arabs and Jews could give me no information as to the whereabouts of a chemist's shop. As I turned the car around to return to our camp, we were amazed to see coming through the market place a white blonde young thing known as a female. The sergeant who had come with me on this jaunt to look after the vehicle nearly fell out of the car. I hailed her in French, endeavoring to get information about getting the film printed. She ignored me and kept on walking. I called her several times but she still wouldn't look in my direction. Finally I raced the car toward her, holding out a roll of film and yelling, "Madoiselle." She turned and stopped while I clambered out of the car, practically falling over the ammo case on the running board. I stuttered my questions in French, and blushed with embarrassment. She calmly shook her head and told me that there were no such shops. She turned and left, and her print dress swayed rhythmically to her short high-heeled steps. I got back in the car. The sergeant and I just sat back and enjoyed the last sight of her. "Just imagine," he said. "White skin!"

Shortly after we got back to camp, three Bedouins, Abdullah, Ali, and Hassan, came in out of the blue; they had walked a hundred miles from Gabes. After questioning them as to the whereabouts of Jerry, I rewarded them with a handful of tea. With only a pinch of it they brewed up enough of the strong yellow tea over a hastily made brush fire to serve a regiment. They kept pouring the hot liquid and leaves back and forth from one cup to another. This indeed was a new type of brew.

I started a quick sketch of them, drawing directly with a brush, a thing I rarely did in my larger drawings. Usually I first blocked out my design lightly in pencil, then drew with ink. This was done mainly to avoid errors and wasting hard-to-get paper. While sketching these three, I learned



14TH LFA — ADS — MDS

"Questioning Arabs" — Fom Tatahouine, Tunisia

3/3/43

Abdullah Thanka — Ali Ibin Said — Hassin Ibin Mohummad

These Arabs had walked 100 miles from Gabes to where we were. I questioned them in Arabic as to the whereabouts of the enemy. This is the answer I got: Jerry was 7 kilos from us and was up in the hills overlooking us. This proved to be correct and we were put on a 24 hour alert standby. Five minutes after completing this 25 minute sketch, we moved out away from the hills, and one of the armored forces took our position and engaged the enemy.



Clifford Sobel

Tunisia 3/3/43 "Questioning Arabs"

"My Buggy" - Tunisia
3/4/43

Living and traveling in our ambulances is a great luxury as we can squeeze a large amount of extra gear in or on our trucks. Every ambulance carries boxes or bags of every description whenever they can be wedged, and this drawing of my buggy is typical. Both fenders carry bedding rolls while a small Italian knapsack is buckled onto the radiator. Precariously perched on the bumper is an old liquor box holding a chicken, one of a pair rapidly being fattened up. On the right, William, alias "Wee Wee", Schorger, my spare driver at the moment, is laboring over a new bait box with disastrous results, as the box was scrounged from a wog (Arab) hut and consequently carried swarms of fleas. Also notable in this detailed drawing is my collapsible water bucket, the blanket airing across the hood, the Arabian water jug, and the eagle insignia of the 15th AFS which I designed when the company was formed in September 1942 in Egypt.

"My Buggy"
Hofford/Seber Tunisia
3/4/43



"Butt Collectors"
Tunisia - 3/4/43

As the 8th Army continues to advance, it has become impossible to buy cigarettes, and more often than not, the weekly issue of 50 "Victories" per man fails to arrive. To insure that they will always have something to smoke, the boys hand their butts to the company cook, who collect the tobacco from them in a tin, as they are pictured doing in this sketch. The tobacco thus obtained is used to make home-made cigarettes for the company when nobody has any at all - not a very sanitary business, but necessary.

Clifford Sizer Tunisia
3/4/43
"Butt Collectors"



A Bofore Gun Team
No. 2 Detachment "B" Troop of the Light Anti-Air Battery R.A.
3/5/43

A Bofore gun team on duty in the desert in Tunisia. The look-out stands with the binoculars and the team sits around the gun, where they spend all their waking hours on duty, waiting for the warning, "Aircraft." This gun belongs to a battery of the Regular Army which was in France from the beginning of the war, was evacuated at Dunkirk, was in Wavell's First Push and in Tobruk for the whole of the famous siege and has been with the 7th Armoured Division of the 8th Army since Alamein.

The battery has completed over two years in the Western Desert and in that time claimed the certain destruction of just over 100 enemy aircraft.

This particular gun has been temporarily put out of action three times, once by bombing, once by shelling, and once by machine-gun fire. It still does the job.

"A Before Gun Team"
Clifford Faber 3/5/53
Lunenburg



"A Desert Rat"

Sergeant Cyril Owen - 853958

3/5/43

This sergeant belongs to a regular anti-aircraft battery (No 2 Detachment "B" Troop, Light Ack Ack Battery, R.A.) of the British Army. He fought in France from the outbreak of the war until he was evacuated at Dunkirk. He was up with Wavell in the first Push, as later with his battery in the Western Desert, and he has been with the famous 7th Armored Division of the 8th Army during the whole of their advance. Recently he was the only survivor when the rest of the gun crew were casualties and he distinguished himself by organizing a party to get the killed and wounded and the gun away from a blazing ammunition truck.

"A Desert Rat" Sgt C. Owen 853958

W. J. Ford / J. B. C.
3/5/43





ADS ON THE MOVE

from them that Jerry was just over the hill a few kilos away. No sooner had I learned this than, right in the middle of the sketch, the Tiggy corroborated their reconnaissance and we were on the move again. In order to pack and get away, I finished the picture in such a rush that I drew the cane Abdullah was carrying right through the crossing lines of his abayah.

During the entire year the sun beats down with such fury and sadistic intensity that the temperature was frequently well above 100°. The winter months, however, were quite mild and it was usually cool enough to wear a heavy sweater or a leather jacket. The crystal-clear nights were intensely cold during all seasons and many nights were spent under as many blankets as could be scrounged.

As we were in an advanced unit with the supply lines so greatly lengthened, our water ration was cut. We were issued one canteen of water every other day. The water in this forward area was strongly brackish and tasted pretty bad, for Rommel had continued to salt the wells as he retreated.

With the scarcity of wells, dishwashing became an art. There was usually a pail half full of warm, sometimes soapy water. This had to do for rinsing the mess tins of anywhere from fifty to a hundred men or more. The water took the food out of the inside of a mess tin or dixie and neatly deposited it on the outside. Grease never came out and the tea stained the enamel cups. When dishwater was nonexistent the last remains of tea were used. Tea corroded the metal tins, but amazingly we kept the eating implements clean.

As we lost touch with the outside world for months at a time, mail became more important to everyone than water or food. The words, "Mail call," electrified a unit. A man expecting mail and receiving none soon became curt, fed up, on edge, and really "brownd off." When he did receive one small note, he was ready to bear and tackle anything. Books and magazines were shared. I always looked forward to *Life* magazine for I followed the art work of their war correspondents all over the world.

One painting in particular, "The Sinking of the *Wasp*," caught my eye and shivered my being with its intense dramatic depiction and draftsmanship. The inferno of horror on this aircraft had personal significance for me at the

time for I knew its flight-deck officer Stuart Frost. It had even more significance for me later on when I chanced to meet its artist, Tom Lea, in Algiers, and we talked away about art into the wee hours of the morning. His enthusiasm for life was like an atomic generator. He was on his way to China to paint Chiang Kai Shek, and as he was short of some good water-color paper I gave him a pad of my own. Years later in reciprocation I received a Texas Stetson from him. Although it was incongruous in New York City, I wore it on many a festive occasion. His switch from painting to writing *The Brave Bulls* exemplified the enthusiasm that so impressed me on our first meeting. His generosity in writing the foreword to my book is more than gratefully appreciated, for he truly knew the trials and tribulations of war reporting.

As Rommel withdrew behind the Mareth defenses, he issued a statement to his men that if they didn't take Medenine the days of the Axis were numbered in North Africa.

The Germans made four attacks on March 6. Nearly 150 panzer tanks were thrown in and the infantry followed them. The battle raged and by dark the Germans withdrew, badly beaten. British artillery mowed down the tanks. The infantry was routed. Antitank guns did the trick and we ourselves didn't lose a tank. There were only very slight casualties on our side. At Fom Tatahouine we were LOB (left out of battle).

Montgomery at this time issued a statement to his troops indicating why the Axis was doomed in North Africa.

First, he explained, Rommel had stretched his supply line and reinforcements too far when he pushed the 8th Army to El Alamein. He should have stopped sooner to consolidate his lines and improve his lines of supply.

Secondly he underestimated the resources of the 8th Army when he retreated so far back into Tunisia, endeavoring to stretch our supply line beyond speedy reach of reinforcements. Again he should have stopped sooner and staked all on a pitched battle which would have decided the control of Africa one way or the other.

Thirdly Rommel, in withdrawing his panzers from their Mareth positions and sending them all the way across Tunisia for what turned out to be an ineffective and short-lived attack on the American positions, and then sending them back to the Mareth Line to attack the 8th Army, had thus



PALMS AT FOUM TATAHOINE

spread-eagled his armor and as at Alamein distributed and exhausted his reserves.

Although there were many battles to come before the expulsion of the Axis from Africa, this message from their field commander fired the 8th Army for the closing kill. The Mareth Line, known as the "Little Maginot," stretched

some twenty-two miles from the sea near Zarat to the Matmata Hills in the west. It now stood between the 8th Army and the Allied Forces in northern Tunisia. The stiffest battle since Alamein faced the "Desert Rats." The line had been built by the French to stop the Italians in Libya who had ridiculed it three years before when they

Lt. Eric T. Newby (SAAF No. 2 Squadron No. 103751)
Johannesburg, South Africa)

Tunisia 3/7/43

At the time of the portrait Lieutenant Newby was twenty-four years old. He entered the SAAF at the beginning of 1940, coincidental with the first efforts of the Union of South Africa in the war. For almost two years he did coastal reconnaissance in the environs of South Africa, over the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. This included hunting for submarines during the capture of Madagascar. In August 1942 he transferred to fighter planes and came to the Western Desert. In March 1943 he was on duty bombing Babes, averaging two flights daily for the previous ten days, when his engine cut out over German lines. He glided to Allied lines and belly-flopped the plane satisfactorily. This was the third Kitty Hawk Mark I, he lost in action. He was first picked up by a tank and during his progress back to his air base came into our company for an evening. He had flown nothing but Kitty Hawks in the Western Desert. "A bit slow, but with those six little lights that twinkle when you press the button."

LT ERIC I. NEWBY S.A.A.F 2 Squadron
103751



Clifford Jaber
Tumbia 3/7/43

"Airing Blankets"
Tunisia 3/12/43

Just as much a part of the daily routine during sunny weather in the desert as maintaining a strict blackout at night is airing one's bedding, for the blankets easily become musty or soon harbor fleas, lice, and other insects if left alone. This painting, done at Fourn Tatahouine, the southernmost outpost of the Marth defenses, shows the different character of the country found in southern Tunisia. Instead of flat dull featureless desert, here are fields of beautiful flowers, flourishing palm trees, and ranges of mountains at times very reminiscent of California. The old Arab fort on the hill commands the pass and gives an excellent view of the surrounding terrain. There are white snails on the blanket. They are found everywhere in North Africa and usually have to be swept from the blankets before they are folded. Scorpions also inhabit the desert and woe to him who picks one up in his bedding roll.



Clifford Faber
"Airing blankets" Tunisia
3/12/43

The 14th Light Field Ambulance Operating Theater - Tunisia 3/13/43
"Plastering a Mine Wound of a Leg"

During active operations the Field Ambulance travels throughout the day with the brigade. Casualties usually arrive at the MDS toward evening and as soon as the brigade stops for the night, the canvas nursing shelters and operating theater shelter are erected and the patients treated. The operating theater shelter can be ready for use after the convoy stops. A tarpaulin slung from the back of a three-ton lorry and suitably propped up with metal struts makes a lightproof space where all necessary operations can be performed. A lightproofing is of particular importance, as most of the work is done at night. Ample floor space is provided and while one patient is being operated on, the next can be prepared and given antishock treatment (blood plasma, warmth etc.) in a corner of the shelter. With this method, as many as thirty patients can be taken care of in a night, and when on column work behind enemy lines, the theater can be ready to be moved at first light.

In the painting a mine wound of a leg is being plastered. The orderly on the right is preparing the plaster from the store as required. An autoclave and sterilizer are in the foreground. A stove under the patient keeps him warm and combats shock. The patient on the left has been prepared and will be next on the table. The table on the left carries all the instruments required for an intravenous anesthetic, while the right-hand table carries most of the operating instruments.

Clifford Faber
March 3/13/53
14 LFA Operating Theater
"Plastering a Mine Wound of Leg"



14th Light Field Ambulance - Operating Theater - Amputation
Tunisia 3/15/43

Surgical wounds are performed in this theater shelter within ten minutes after the convoy stops. In the painting an intravenous anesthetic, the kind usually given, is being administered. The instruments required for most operations are spread out on the table at the left. More instruments, if required, can be handed out from the interior of the lorry. Sterilizing is carried out in a corner of the shelter. Many drums of sterile linen and swabs are carried in the lorry. Each man has a definite job to do. One helps the anesthetist, one stays in the lorry to hand out plasma and instruments as required, one assists at the actual operation, and several produce instruments and swabs from the table as needed.



W. Ford Sabar 3/5/13
IVLFA Operating Theatre
"AMPUTATION"

TUNISIA

PLASMA
DISTILLED
WATER
ING SETS

Lt. Col. Clifford D. Evans, RAMC
Tunisia 3/16/43

Before the war, Lieutenant Colonel Evans practiced at Keynsham near Bath, Somerset, commissioned in the supplementary reserve in 1925, was attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1933. September 13, 1939, landed in France with the BEF and worked in a general hospital until its evacuation in June 16, 1940; landed in Egypt in September 1940 as registrar and later anesthetist at a general hospital; in February 1942 was posted as second in command of a Light Field Ambulance; in October 1942 was given command of the 14th Light Field Ambulance and has been with the unit during the advance from Alamein to Tunisia.

Clifford Fisher
3/6/43 Tunisia

2d. Col. C. [redacted]
R.A.M.C.



Captain Samuel Vincent RAMC
 Surgeon
 Tunisia 3/17/43

On completing this painting I received a short auto-biographical sketch from Captain Vincent. This unfortunately was lost, when I was evacuated to a hospital and the details will have to be filled in from memory.

He is an Irishman, small, very quiet and reserved in manner. He is a surgeon of the 14th Light Field Ambulance Company, which has seen service in France and the entire successful desert campaign, from Alamein to Tunis. He studied at the Edinburgh University and was in charge of a hospital ship during the early stages of the war. Most of his operating was done at night within the range of the enemy guns during the desert push. As many as thirty operations a night were performed by him. By a happy coincidence this portrait of him was done on St. Patrick's Day.

Clifford Sabers
Tunisia 3/17/43

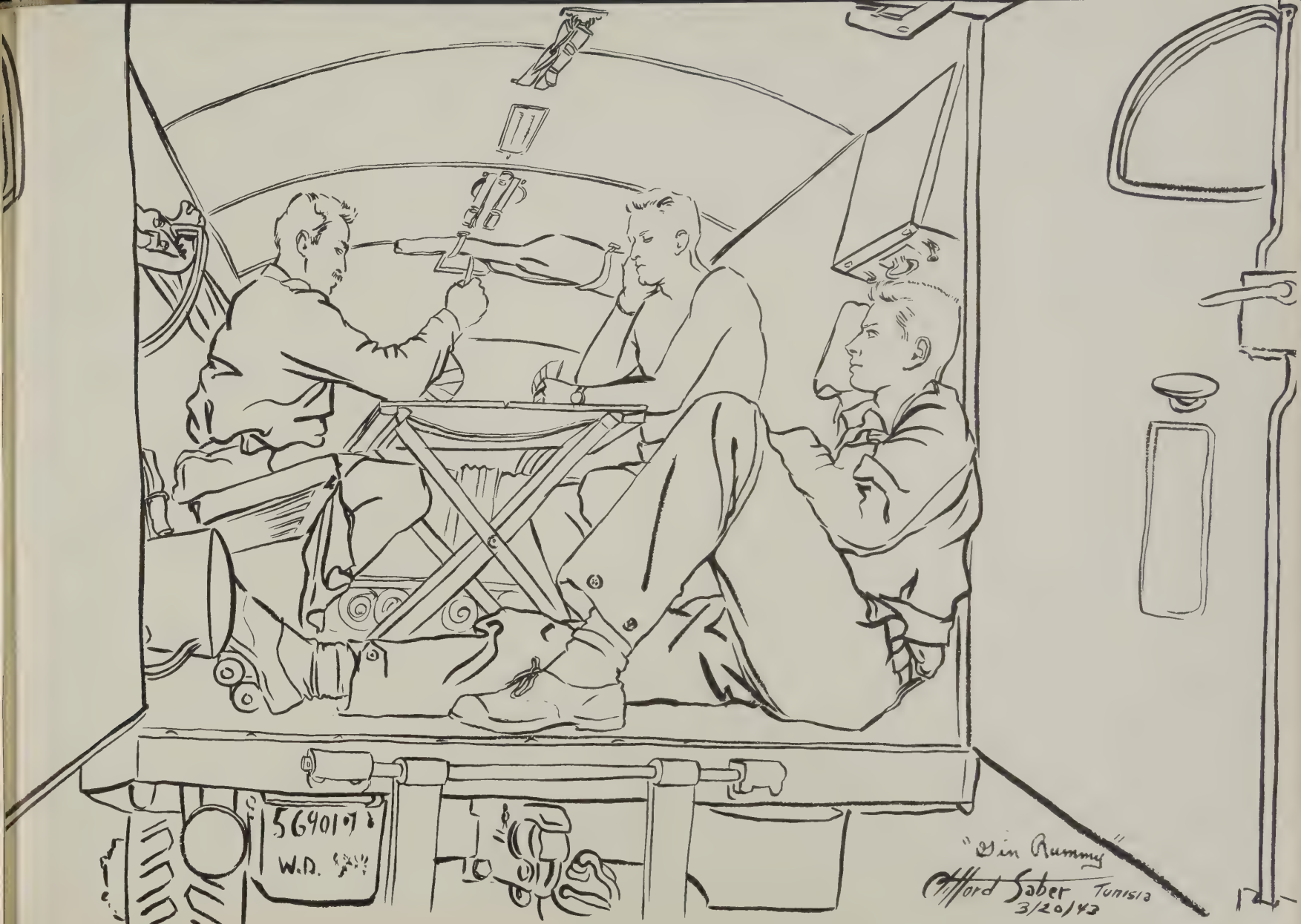
Capt. [redacted]
Surgeon R.A.M.C



"Gin Rummy"
Tunisia 3/20/43

More often than not soldiers on the desert are faced with long periods of inactivity. This is especially true of ambulance drivers; often weeks pass without a patient's being carried in, which makes our life very hard on the more restless members of the AFS. Reading is probably the most popular way of passing the boring hours; bridge, poker, and gin rummy - pictured here - are a strong second. Letter writing fills many quiet hours for some, while others devote their writing efforts to other kinds of literary output.

The most enjoyable of many leisure hours comes in the evening when one of the ambulances in each section is blacked out. Cards, reading, or letter writing occupies everyone for an hour or two but inevitably the hissing of the primus stove announces that a brew-up or a meal is in the making.



569019

W.D. 3/20/43

"Din Rummy"
Ford Saber Tunisia
3/20/43

A.F.S. Mess In The Mareth
Tunisia 3/20/43

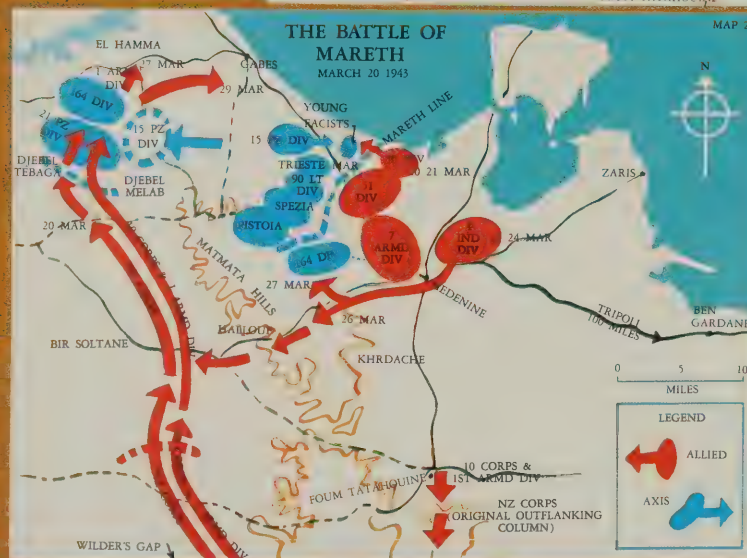
To ease the work of the tired drivers in the Mareth Line several unassigned sections of A.F.S. ambulances were attached to a car pool five miles from the MDS. Whenever there is a press of work or a shortage of ambulances for evacuations they are called upon, for it was essential to keep the MDS as clear as possible since the flow of patients from forward areas is unpredictable. Attached to the car pool is a small section of Workshops and the three cooks pictured here sweating over the light mid-day meal, known to all Britishers as Tiffin. This is cooked up over petrol burners. Behind the cooks is the ever-present 3 ton truck, which was the backbone of the 8th Army transport. At the base of the tree is a Jerry can. Nothing that the Germans brought into the desert with them contributed more to our victory than these ingenious, practical cans.



AFS Mess in the Mareth
H. Ford Faber
Tunis 3/20/43



MAP 4



THE BATTLE
OF THE MARETH
AND THE AXIS
EXPULSION

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

turned east to march on Egypt. Now, having themselves been defeated, they were defending it with the Afrika Korps and reinforcements of the German SS Elite.

There were three main stages to the Mareth Line; first, forward positions which contained concrete pillboxes and emplacements for small arms and antitank guns covering the ways across Wadi Zigzaou; second, concrete positions in the gaps between these, making the line continuous; third, artillery support positions to the rear which covered the forward localities. The key approaches to the Mareth Line were the strong frontier outposts built to block the foothills. The first, Ben Gardane, was a village defended with four concreted strong points on the main roads; the second was Fom Tatahouine, where the roads were covered by three strong points built into the commanding features. Medenine, an important road center, was similarly defended but intended mainly as a base for mobile counterattack.

The Mareth Line was built on the assumption that it could not be outflanked. The Germans had worked over the original French defenses and had improved them strategically with tank ditches, mine fields, and dug-in emplacements.

Ben Gardane and Medenine had been taken by the 8th Army and now the 25-pounders were aimed at the Mareth. The difficult frontal attacks on this Rommel stronghold were undertaken by the 51st Highland and the 50th Northumbrian Divisions. The latter was trained in pillbox assault warfare. The main feature of the battle was the silent flanking movement to the south of the New Zealanders brought from Tripoli. The Indian Division, expert mountain fighters, went in on a short flanking movement to divert the enemy. Later the 1st Armoured followed the New Zealanders by swinging through the edge of the Sahara with the protection of the RAF. At the same time, further west, General Patton's American 2nd Corps made a drive to Gafsa to force Rommel to spread his strength as thinly as possible.

Rommel was kept on the move exhausting his strength because of the 8th's outflanking movements, though he succeeded in stopping the thrust on the coast. The most crucial time in the battle was the early hours of March 23 when Montgomery speedily switched the whole attack to

the extreme west and discontinued his efforts on the coast. The New Zealanders made their encirclement, at El Hamma surprising the Germans who had thrown a tank force against them to keep them from reaching Gabes, and completely surrounding the entire Afrika Korps. The Germans were forced to withdraw hastily from their Mareth positions through the Gabes Gap; when they withdrew they left the Italians behind to protect them while they made a getaway.

As the main attack began, Wee Wee and I were hastily recalled from the ADS of the 14th LFA at Fom Tatahouine to a car pool servicing the Northumbrian Division and other divisions along the line. When we arrived our guns were sending over a tremendous barrage with a continuous roar from a hundred shells. As they quieted down Jerry retaliated with his artillery, and it was almost as fierce as ours. This was Alamein all over again with our eighteen bombers going over and the wounded pouring in; and we ourselves were on the go, working without a letup. As I waited for patients I hen-scratched sketches on the run. The battle wasn't as one-sided as Alamein had been; the line was hard to crack. The 50th Division secured its objectives protected by barbed wire against cross fire from the flanks. The casualties were heavy and we worked more steadily than we had in Egypt. Some tanks succeeded in crossing the wadi and their losses were considerable. Sappers had difficulty clearing paths for vehicles. More and more casualties kept coming in and we went on working with no sleep.

In some of the defenses the enemy held out and we got a hammering. Enemy fighters and bombers came over bombing and strafing our trucks while we endeavored to evacuate the wounded. By March 21 we held a bridgehead and another artillery barrage expanded our foothold. Enemy reserves of the SS Elite began to arrive and the fighting mounted in fury. Casualties came in like a running stream. It rained and our air force was bogged down. The Germans counterattacked, recapturing what objectives we had taken. The griff from the wounded was terrible but their morale was higher than that of the casualties at Alamein.

From the wounded we learned that the much-feared Indian Gurkhas had gone in. We were fortunate to have

these squat, high-cheekboned Mongolians from the mountains of Nepal on our side, for they were notorious hill and night fighters. Silently stalking their prey like panthers, they carried vicious-looking long curved knives, called kukris. These swung from sheaths tied behind to their belts. Tradition says that a Gurkha cannot draw his knife from the sheath without drawing blood. They were taught to use these weapons from childhood and to wield them with murderous effect. As the American Indian collected scalps, these commando soldiers of India collected ears and were well known for this habit throughout the desert by both armies.

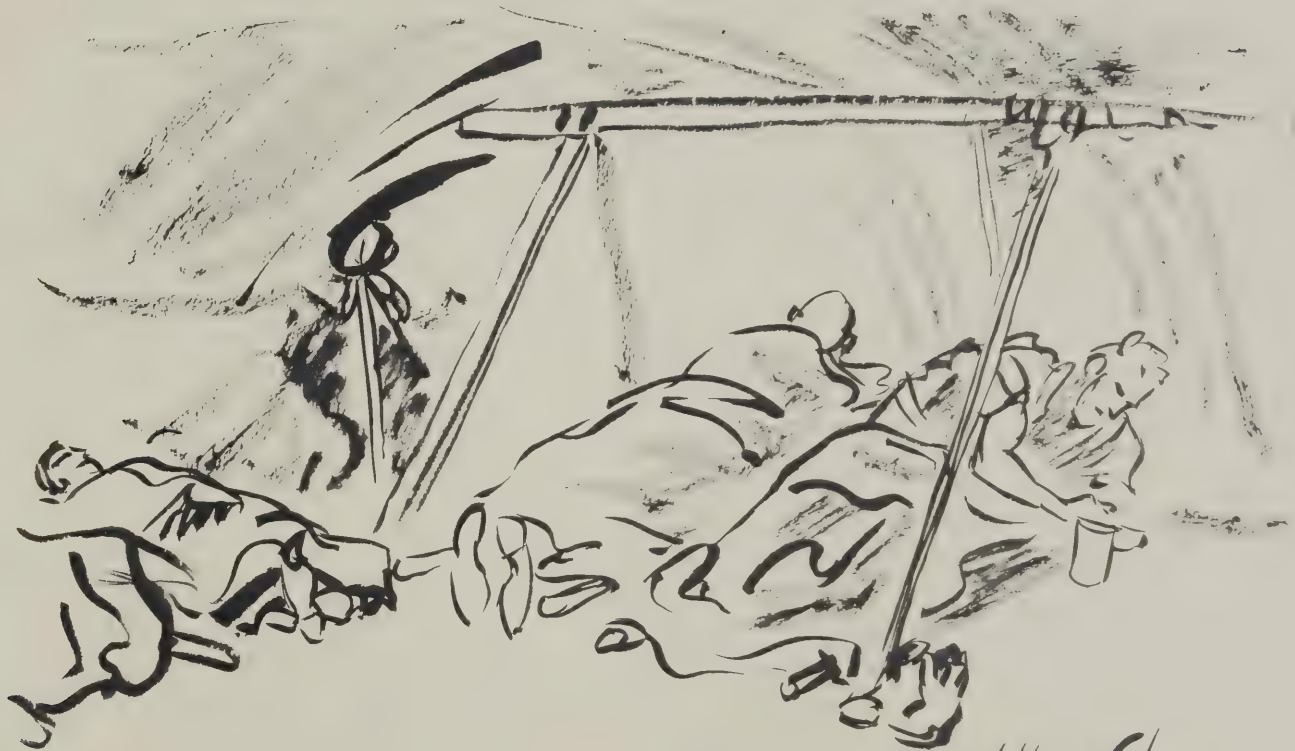
Enemy wounded came in first, the Italians and then the Germans. Some of Hitler's SS Elite reinforcements dribbled in. We had heard so much about them that curiosity got the better of us but they were like any other men put out of battle.

In between runs between the ADS and MDS, Wee Wee and I got to the cooks at the car pool who were also on twenty-four-hour duty. When we were refreshed with bully-beef stew and tea, we were called back for more runs.

Shuttling back and forth between evacuation points, ambulance drivers were questioned as much as the wounded by the MO's at the dressing station concerning the battle. Occasionally we were given a shot of rum to keep us awake; at other times Wee Wee and I pulled our vaudeville harmonica and guitar playing routine, getting the wounded to sing now and then.

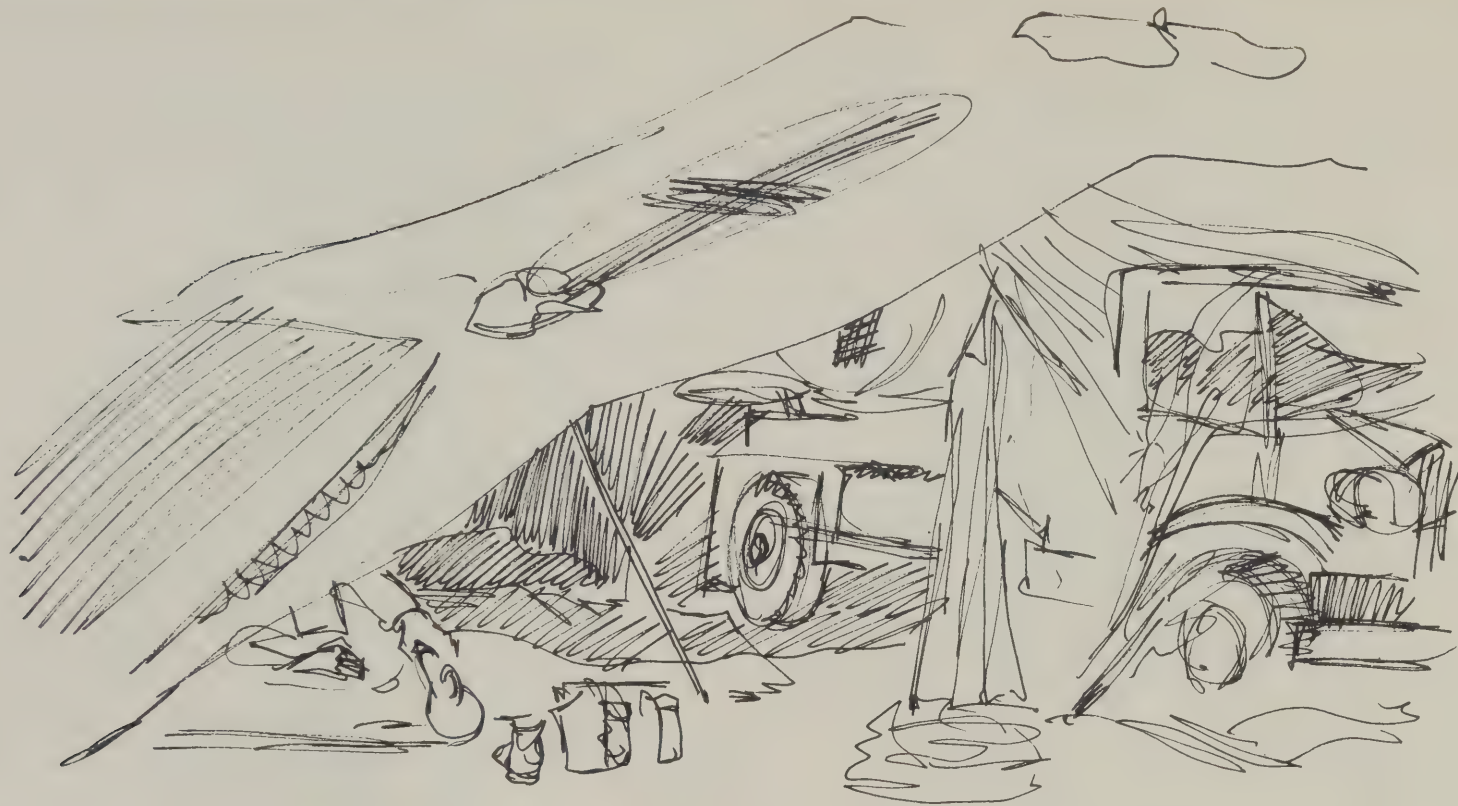
Midday on the twenty-second, during the drizzle, I waited for patients while Wee Wee helped the MO's in the tent. He came over to tell me we had a good wait before loading up. Outside of the time it had taken to grab a bite to eat on the run it was the first short breather I had had to check the ambulance and to relax for an hour to do a painting of the scene. It was good to wield a brush again and to move the colored water over the soft paper. I was fortunate enough to complete the painting before an orderly hailed me over to the tent and back to duty.





Arthur E. Siber
3/21/43

CASUALTIES



"ADS TRUCK"

C. J. Fisher
3/21/47



SKETCHES ON THE RUN

Chapman & Co
3/21/42

Mareth Casualties
Tunisia 3/22/43

This water color (a 60 minute sketch) was done while I waited for patients between evacuations carried out continuously for 72 hours. It depicts the reception tent of the 186th MDS of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, then working day and night eight miles from behind the strongest defenses of the Mareth Line where some of the fiercest fighting of the Tunisian campaign took place. Each ambulance arriving from an ADS would drive to the reception tent where the wounded were examined before being transferred to the other tents for immediate evacuation back to the CCS area. The small tent on the right is a pack store where all the gear was held. Each day would find an enormous pile of equipment here, ready to be shipped for salvage. The empty petrol tins mark the tracks around the MDS, either working with the ADS and regimental aid posts or on the long evacuation over the bumpy track back to the CCS area.



"Month Casualties"

Clifford J. Ober

5/22/43 Tunisia

THE FOLLOWING LETTERS TELL
THE REST OF MY NORTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

Mrs. Corey --

This is a letter Cliff started
before he was wounded. I thought
you would like to have it.

Elmer W. Lower

Clifford Sabers
American Field Service
A.P.O. 616/5 Postmaster

Tunisia
3/20/43

Dear Mom,

How can I begin to thank you for all that you've done?
I am so indebted to you - it will take my children and my grand-
children to repay you...

The exhibit must have been well received. Thanks to
you. It must have been a taxing job to put it on... It was
nice of Eddie to sacrifice his leave to help you. Do thank him
for me... I am also writing Mr. Earle Winslow and the Society,
so if you get this first - thank them all; more than sincerely.
Also Miss Denauer and the critics. I think you'll have to have
a secretary to take care of all the correspondence...

I received all this good news at the Field Headquarters
after our section had been relieved of RAP, ADS and MDS
assignments. We are now in a pool which serves Infantry,
Armored Cars, and wherever we may be needed. We are two
miles from the front and I have a deep slit trench which holds
five men standing at a nearby dune. However, it's pretty quiet...

In the headquarters truck, which formerly was a
British lorry and is now a huge German transport trailer,

c
under the letter "S" in the assorted mail box, I finally
received some mail after anxiously waiting weeks
for some word of what's taking place. I first read
Bebe's flowery description of the opening day... To learn
that 500 people came to the opening was overwhelming. You
certainly did a wonderful job...

Reading Eddie's letter and learning that critics and
leading illustrators have spoken of me in the same breath
with Winslow Homer was too much. And as for the New York
Times reproducing five paintings in full color in their
pictorial section - I have never heard of that before.
Truly it's an honor. By all means send thank you notes to
all the critics for me. And being made a member of the
Society of American Illustrators - well - I just don't know
what to say - I'm speechless.

After so many disappointments this has been a glorious
day - if with the oncoming do I should go the way of some
of my buddies what little I have tried to contribute to our
war effort has not been done in vain. It's good to be an
American, for only in our country can things like this happen.

Well - speak of such things and it happens. Jerry just
came over and dropped a bomb about 300 yards away. There has
just been a mad scramble - Damn it! - we have been getting
in and out of this blacked-out ambulance into my long

3

deep slit trench ever since that first one landed nearby; shaking the ambulance and which set something abloze — he has been dropping stuff all around for the past fifteen minutes. Here I start to be philosophical . . . and a little stuff begins to fly around. Here we go again — Five of us were in the trench, not far away are eight flosses — well, here we go again! — there's a little artillery fire going on in the distance where there are a lot of white flosses. Damn those bastards — one can't sit and write any more.

In the early part of the evening there were five of us in my buggy, Al Bowron, Jack Himmel, Boo Boo Reynolds of my section, and Howie Weisburg. Al and Howie have been playing gin rummy on a scrounged table which is collapsible and which I have fastened when mobile to my outside petrol rack; Jack and I were writing letters. St. Chas. O'Neil and George Tanser came over to tell us breakfast was earlier and Jerry came over too and how. The noise was terrific, shaking the bus, and I expected some shrapnel any second but luckily there was none. I have two light switches in the ambulance and immediately everyone crouched. Everyone was in the back and they put the light out. I, sitting in front writing this — crouched — tried to put this down as quickly as possible and also put out the forward light

4

where I was sitting. The fellows were yelling, "lights — lights!" and then we all dashed for the trench. We have been going back and forth ever since. Even the motor of a car caused quite a false alarm. It looks like everyone has vowed to sleep outside tonight. It's a beautiful night with a near full moon and little sparklers gracefully falling. Well — if there are any more interruptions I'll let you know — I hope not.

Well — to get back to what I was writing originally. All this good news has by no means swelled my head. I have a long way to go yet and a great deal of work to do.

My paintings of this North African campaign with the 8th Army are coming along fine. I think the work will serve two purposes to show the folks back home conditions in the British army in contrast to our own and to help build a higher morale between our two countries. I hope when we meet up with the Doughboys to complete this series with a painting of a Tommy and Yankee lighting cigarettes together. I wish it were the American army I had in paint by now but soon hope to have my wish granted. As you know I paint when I have the spare time and I try not to waste time. When I do I feel like kicking

5

myself.

Here is a letter I received from Major Hinrichs who was with Major Benson on the trip over. He has gone back to the States,

HQ. A.F.S. G.H.Q. M.E.F.

February 18, 1943

Vol. Clifford Sabers
15th AFS 8th Army

I have received advice from Mr. Dalatti that the Office of War Information, New Delhi, India is interested in your services as of June 30th. I am sure you would like this information and can assure you that we shall do everything to co-operate in getting you placed.

I am pleased to hear that you have turned in a good job since your return to 15th AFS and assure you that you may count on my wholehearted recommendation at the end of your enlistment. I'm sure you must understand that the position I had to take regarding your other offers of employment involved nothing personal on my part.

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Give my best to all my old friends. Good luck.
Keep up the good record

Danbar M. Hinrichs
Acting C.O. AFS

It's 11 P.M. and the boys have all departed - I shall retire with Jerry zooming overhead and continue this in the morning.

I mean't to finish writing this - this morning but from what started last night we all received hurried calls to an MDS (Infantry) where we did some duty work shuttling patients from one tent to another and then a 35-mile evacuation to a CCS over the worst roads imaginable. Our patients were badly wounded and it was a job crawling at 5 to 10 miles an hour to get them back. Last night our headquarters which is further down the line was strafed. Wee Wee Schorger, my spare driver, was with Jack Lund and from what they brag - it seems Jerry was going for them. It's getting to look like Alamein again a lot of - - fly around.

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They brought in a lot of Jervies and Dies with our own boys—they must have gone through hell in a terrific shelling—feet and hands completely shot off—abdominal wounds. I wish you could see the stamina and guts these boys all show—not a whimper. One dazed Jerry felt a little at home when I spoke to him in German. I evacuated 3 lying cases of Tommies. Endeavoring to help them forget their pain and the roughness of the road, I played my harmonica . . . , seeing as I seem to be able to get a listenable tune out of it. . . . I played English and American popular tunes. I think, I hope, it helped. It took four hours to carry the patients. Every time I hit a rut, or deep dip in the road—it went right through me—I felt all their miseries. It was a tedious trip. When we arrived at the reception tent and got them into the shelter and more complete medical care their thank-you smiles were as good to feel as the news of the exhibition. I managed to do several rapid dry brush and pen notes throughout a busy day. It's night again and Wee Wee

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is back with me and we're on call—24 hour service. To get back to Hinrich's letter and what you have done.

Clifford Saber
American Field Service
APO-616
c/o Postmaster
New York

May 14, 1943

Dear Mom:

Thanks to Mr. Henry H. West, of General Motors, and his kind secretary, Ninio, the latter taking down this letter in shorthand and typing it for me, I am finally able to send a letter off to you. I would have written you sooner, only I had what is known as "diplopia," which is double vision. I've wanted to write ever since I got into the hospital. I think I worried more about not being able to write you than about my illness. However, I hope this will clear up a lot of things you have wondered about.

We were out in the blue, on a 72-hour duty without a letup. I had been driving and evacuating patients all day and night. It was two o'clock in the morning when Wee Wee took over the wheel. We were returning to the MDS to pick up wounded. It was a beautiful night when out of nowhere appeared this huge bomber. It looked as though it were perched up on the crest of the hill on the road ahead of us. I thought it was one of our planes, until Wee Wee yelled, "Watch out for the rear gunner!" I saw the flash of the gun and felt the bullet hit me. At first I thought I was grazed, and Wee Wee gave me the impression that I had been. I guess he didn't want to alarm me. As soon as I was hit, everything turned red, and I had the sensation that someone had poured a bucket of hot lava over my head which started to envelope my entire body. I tried to say something to Wee Wee but my voice just did not seem to come out. My lips moved but there was no utterance. In endeavoring to move, I discovered that my left arm and leg were paralyzed. Wee Wee immediately stopped the car and yelled to Al Bowron, who was returning behind us. He drove up alongside, and they both bandaged me up and rushed me to the MDS. Throughout all this I was conscious. As a matter of fact, just before I was hit Wee Wee and I were singing "Worried Mind." And even as they were rushing me back to the MDS and I lay on the stretcher inside the ambulance, I managed to sing a few bars of the tune. Al and Wee Wee's split-second timing in bandaging me and rushing me to the MDS I think helped save my life. I do not remember very much about my arrival, except seeing some of the

boys; but hours later I remember awakening in the operating room and listening to the surgeon speaking to the nurse as he was operating on my head. I had a local anesthetic which was injected at the base of my skull. I spoke to him and he told me I had a large hole in my head and that the right side of my brain was injured. I think he worked all night on me: 7 hours. As he was tinkering with my skull it felt and sounded like someone opening oysters. He assured me that I would be all right, and noticing my restlessness, said that he had done so many operations that he could do this blindfolded. I was evacuated and flown down the line to a base hospital. I thought the plane ride was actually worse than being shot, as it was not one of our big transport planes. From this base hospital I was flown back to where I am now. Until a few weeks ago, my head was encased in a plaster cast.

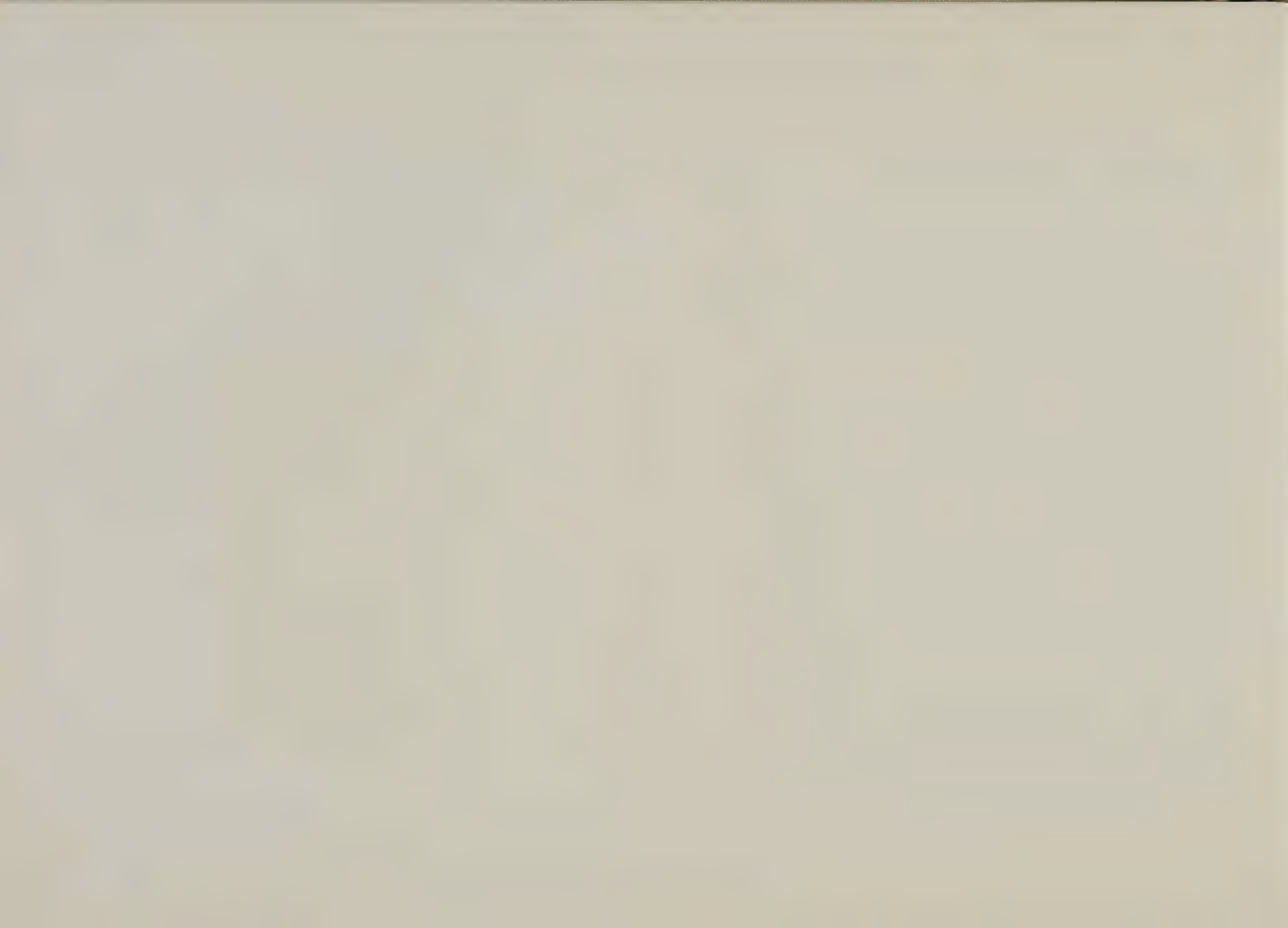
My wound is healing quite well, and the paralysis of my left arm and leg is gradually wearing off. I am even walking around now, although the sensation in my arm and leg is as if I were wearing gloves and six pairs of stockings. My double vision is clearing up and in a week's time I hope to have some glasses which will enable me to begin painting again.

Don't worry about me, for I hope to be with you again soon.

All my love,

Clifford

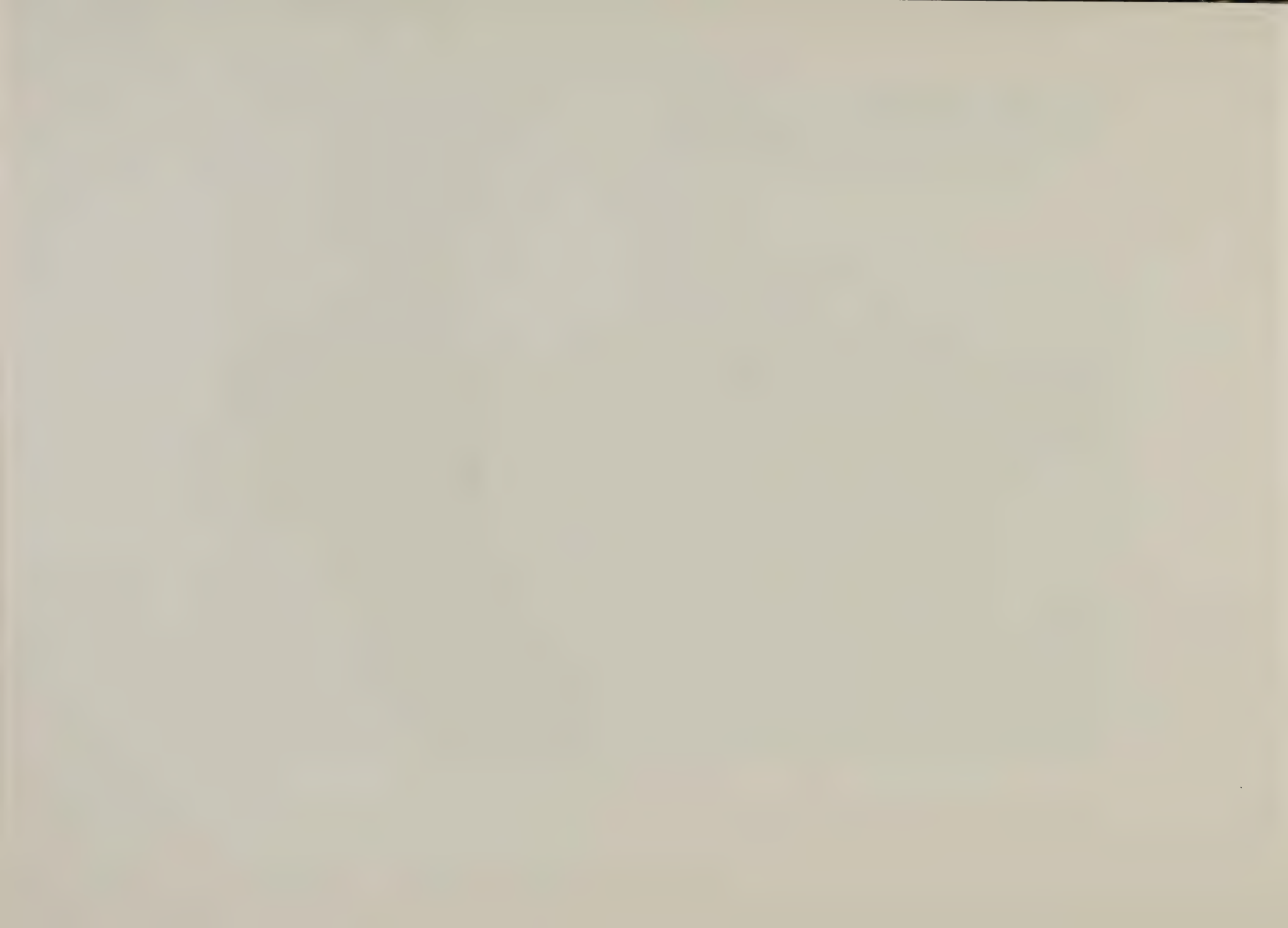
15th Scottish Base Hospital
Cairo, Egypt



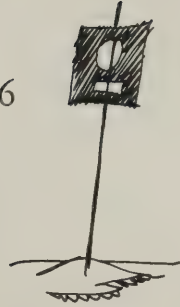


"DESERT CLOUDS"

Clifford Saber
Tunisia
3/1/83



Chapter 6



INTO THE SEA

...And nothing has stopped us. You have given your families at home and in fact the whole world, good news, and plenty of it every day....I doubt if our Empire has ever possessed such a magnificent fighting machine as the Eighth Army; you have made your name a household word all over the world....I am very proud of the Eighth Army.

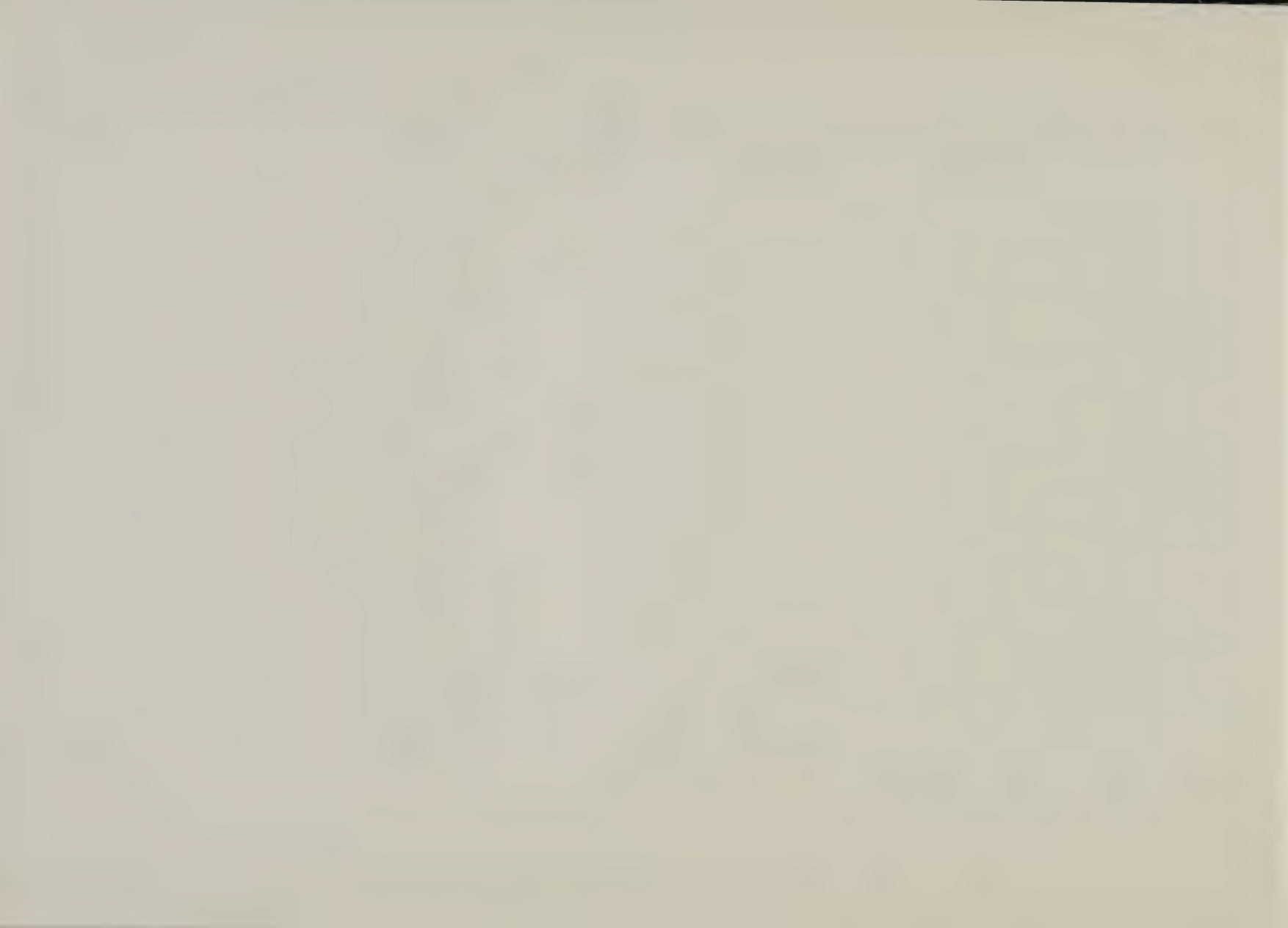
...And now let us get on with the third task.

Let us make the enemy face up to and endure a first-class Dunkirk on the beaches of Tunis.

The triumphant cry now is:

FORWARD TO TUNIS! DRIVE THE ENEMY INTO THE SEA!

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S *dispatch to the troops,*
8 April, 1943



8th ARMY COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

ARMY INITIALS

W.D.	Western Desert
Coy	British abbreviation of Company
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
ACC	Ambulance Car Company
RAP	Regimental Aid Post (furthest medical aid station in the battle area)
ADS	Advance Dressing Station (about ten miles to the rear of an RAP)
MDS	Main Dressing Station (halfway distant between the battle area and the nearest base hospital)
CCS	Casualty Clearance Station (nearby to MDS and shipping depot of wounded to base hospital)
DDMS	Deputy Director of Medical Services
MO	Medical Officer
BH	Base Hospital
HQ	Headquarters
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
KRR	King's Royal Rifles
LRDG	Long Range Desert Group (the bearded submarines of the desert)
NAAFI	Navy-Army-Air Force Institute (an organization which supplies all mobile canteens with their goods)
AAF	American Air Force
SAAF	South African Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
AFS	American Field Service

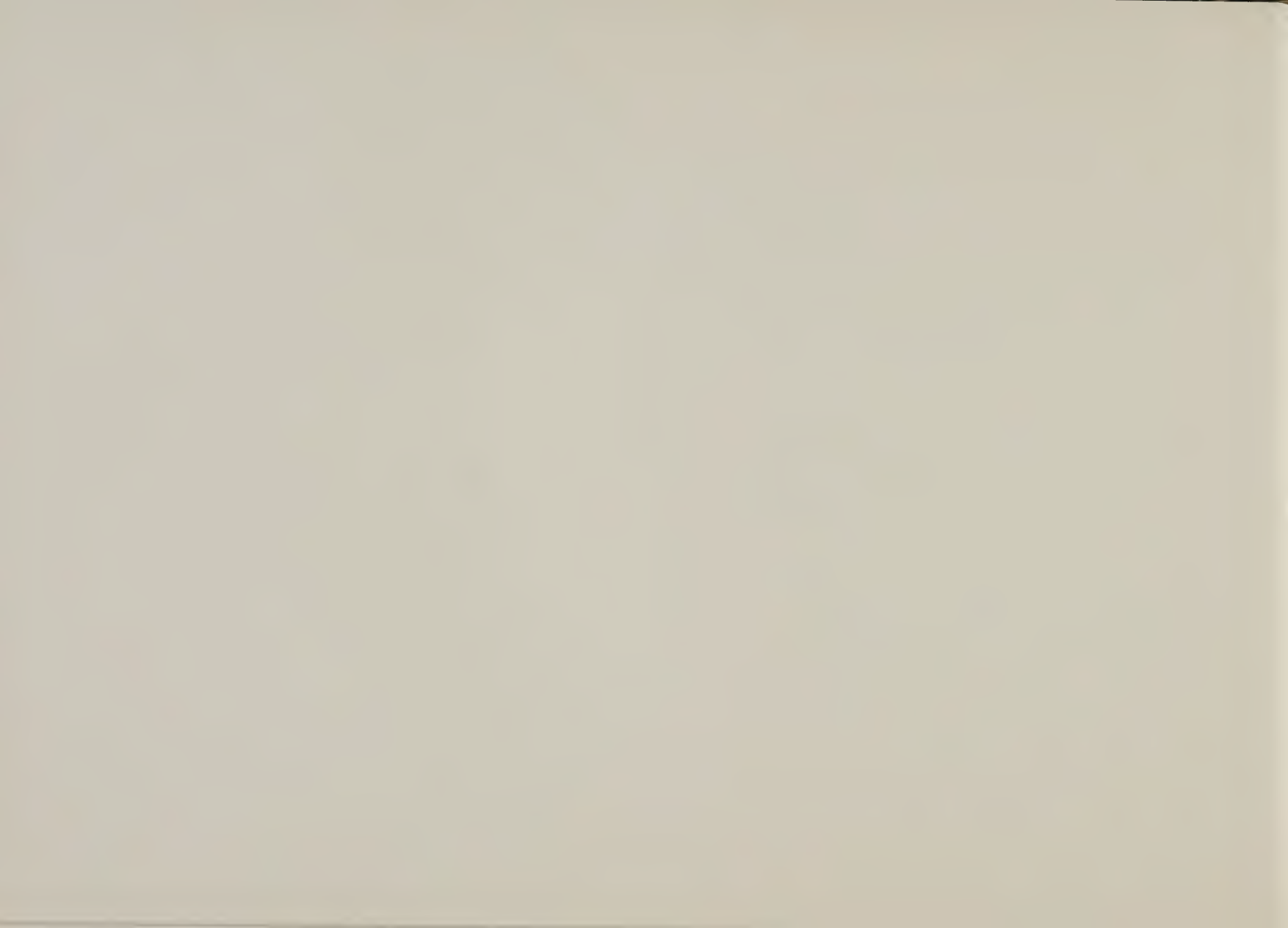
ANGLO-ARABESQUE IDIOMS

Baksheesh	Arabic term of alms or anything gratis
Malish	Never mind
Eggis	Eggs
Bardine	Not now, later
Shufti	See
Bint	Girl
Zig Zig	Good time
Yal-la	Get going
Imshe	March (get going), emphatic Yal-la Imshe

FAMILIAR TERMS

Blue	Desert
Wadi	A dried-up river and water bed (gullies washed out in sudden desert rains)
Scrounge	Minor looting, a Desert Rat's right in the desert
Aussie	Australian
Digger	Australian
Kiwi	New Zealander
Itie	Italian
Jerry	German
Wog	Arab
Gurkha	Indian fighter
Maori	New Zealand native fighter
Cherry Pickers	11th Royal Hussars
Civvy Street	Home (civilian life)
V's	Cigarettes issued by the British (ration — 50 per man)
Brew-Up	Tea
Tiffin	Light noonday meal
Lorry	Truck
Tiggys	Workshops
Griff	Talk, gossip, rumors
Bully Beef	Corned beef in tins
M & V	Meat and vegetables in tins

Type 12 on 13 point Garamond Linotype with 18 and 24 point
ATF Garamond for display
Binding sailcloth-linen finish
Paper 80# Curtis Stoneridge White Text
Lithographed in four colors by Shorewood Press, Inc., New York
Design by the author
Published by Sketchbook Press, Franklin Square, New York





Eighth Army



5th Indian Division



7th Armoured Division ('The Desert Rats')



1st Armoured Division



2nd New Zealand Division



10 Corps



10th Armoured Division



13 Corps



G.H.Q. Middle East



4th Indian Division



50th (Northumbrian) Division



Polish Formations



30 Corps



44th (Home Counties) Division



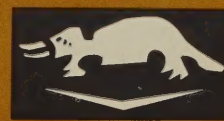
French Forces of Interior



Greece



1st South African Division



9th Australian Division



51st (Highland) Division



